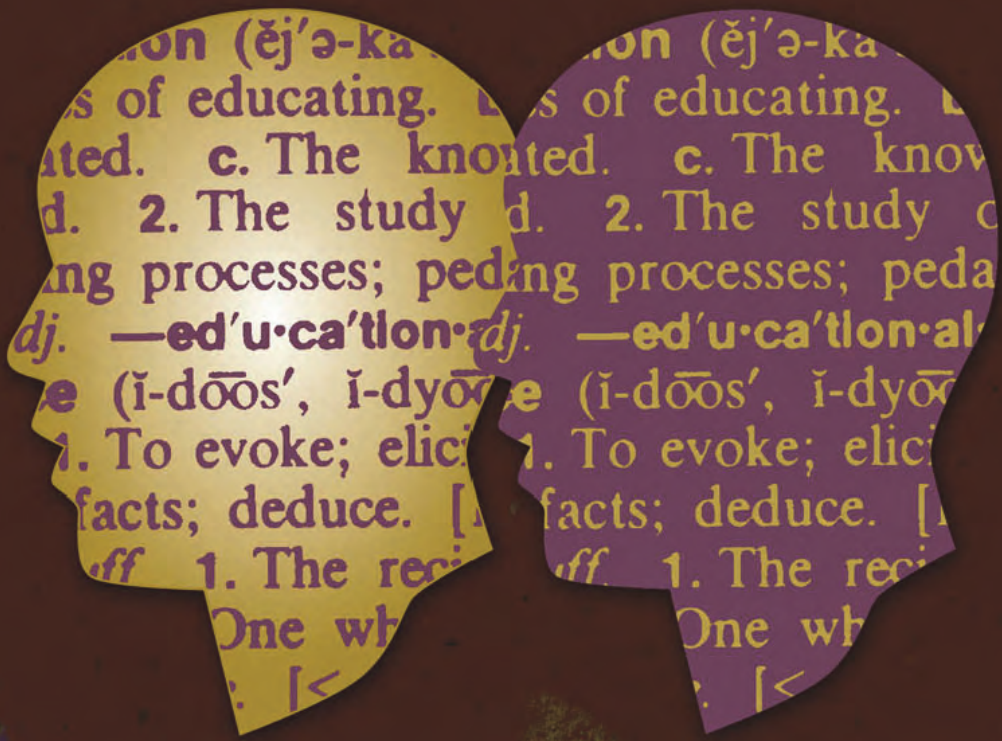
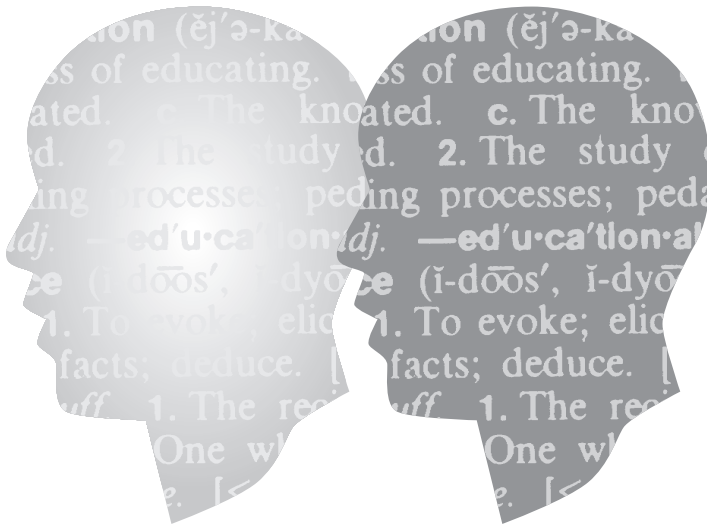




HIGHER EDUCATION EXCHANGE



2008



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The *Higher Education Exchange* is founded on a thought articulated by Thomas Jefferson in 1820:

I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.

In the tradition of Jefferson, the *Higher Education Exchange* agrees that a central goal of higher education is to help make democracy possible by preparing citizens for public life. The *Higher Education Exchange* is part of a movement to strengthen higher education's democratic mission and foster a more democratic culture throughout American society. Working in this tradition, the *Higher Education Exchange* publishes case studies, analyses, news, and ideas about efforts within higher education to develop more democratic societies.

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FOREWORD

By Deborah Witte

Which way do you say it? University-community partnerships? Or community-university partnerships? Does it really matter, or is it just semantics? I never used to think it mattered until a colleague of mine began to bring together groups of everyday citizens with some university faculty. Her work began as a research experiment to learn from the relationships that a few communities and universities were forging. The research project was known simply as the university-community workshop. But then she turned the name on its head, and put community first. What a difference it made. Thinking about these partnerships as one in which the community leads the way left me feeling a little off balance. I was so used to the other dynamic. So is it just semantics? I don't think so.

This journal, throughout its decade-plus history, has strived to be a place where faculty, administrators, students, *and citizens* might exchange ideas, news, and practices in an effort to help democracy work as it should. We think of ourselves as part of a movement to strengthen higher education's democratic mission and foster a more democratic culture. While we've had success engaging faculty, and to some extent students and administrators, we've been less successful with everyday citizens.

For some time now, Kettering's research has attempted to raise the visibility of the public's attitude that higher education and other "public" institutions only represent and grant legitimacy to the established elite. Institutions traditionally foster an ethos of professionalism that elevates the role of experts over that of everyday citizens. The academy needs to ask itself, is simply wishing to serve citizens enough? Why do so few communities engage with universities around anything but technical or expert knowledge? Higher education, working on *behalf* of the public, can be somewhat arrogant and as a result, citizens resist engaging. Instead, they want to work *with* institutions.

While Kettering has long been interested in the community-university connection—this journal is a testament to that idea as well

as others—we haven't done a good job engaging the citizen. And it's time to do that.

The issue begins with an essay by David Brown, coeditor of the *Higher Education Exchange*. David focuses on the problem of the professional mindset in higher education that has increasingly fostered a culture of credentialed “problem-solvers.” But what happens, he asks, when the problem-solvers come up with solutions that don't have a connection to the way the community thinks about and defines the problem? The gap between university and community just gets wider. Being a professional should mean being sensitive to citizens and their concerns. Instead, as Brown tells us, many professionals “distance themselves from those whose interests they serve.” But his experience has taught him that the “most important asset that professionals bring to problem-solving is their ‘tacit knowledge’ acquired in practice—experience that goes well beyond the formal knowledge acquired in their schooling. It follows, then, that the ‘local knowledge,’ the practical experience that those without credentials bring to a problem, also counts and should be a necessary part of their problem solving together.”

In the next essay, Sean Creighton, a newly minted PhD from Antioch University, shares his dissertation experience. Long interested in civic engagement efforts within higher education, Creighton was quick to realize that almost all of the research on community-university partnerships was focused on the university. No one was studying the phenomenon of engagement from the community's perspective. And so he set out to do just that. Using an action-research methodology, Creighton gathered a group of representatives from community organizations who, over a period of several meetings, came up with ten indicators of community engagement. While the indicators themselves are revealing, even more interesting was the reaction Creighton received when he presented his research at academic conferences. The validity of his results was questioned, his methodology was questioned, the sample size and even the overall research design was questioned. Despite the skepticism of some academics toward his research, Creighton remains committed to his most important finding, the value of listening closely to community partners.

An interview with Marguerite Shaffer, an associate professor at Miami University, follows. Shaffer shares the insights she discovered while developing a new American studies major that provides opportunities for students to engage in the community. She found

that students, as well as faculty, embraced the opportunity to “put their learning to work in a larger public context.” One such project, Acting Locally, “explores the intersections between globalization and local transformation” through what Shaffer calls the *partnership mechanism*. This partnership mechanism supports and sustains individuals, organizations, and communities by facilitating conversations and making connections. An accompanying interview to the Shaffer piece illustrates one of these Acting Locally projects. Lourdes Leon, owner of the Taqueria Mercado Bakery, tells the story of a language exchange program she initiated that brings together university students who want to learn Spanish and Hispanic bakery employees who want to improve their English. She says the project works “because we respect each other, are always open to criticism and trying new things, and we enjoy what we are doing together.”

The following essay by Laura Downey, Carol Ireson, Doug Scutchfield, and Al Cross tells of their experiences linking a local newspaper to a public health initiative, and the implications of this partnership for one rural community. The project pushed two university departments to partner for one goal: citizens’ engagement with and knowledge of the community’s health. But if the partnership had just stopped there, we would be reading about a typical community-university partnership. Instead, this project also engaged the local newspaper to disseminate a series of articles titled, “Listening to Concerns and Discovering Solutions Together.” As Downey, et al. explain, “the assets of the academic institutions ... can support local institutions if and when their resources are limited.” The relationship between the university and the local newspaper became reciprocal; the paper possessed connections to the community that the university didn’t have, and the university provided time and talent that the paper didn’t have. They assert that a partnership within two disciplines inside the university could not ensure the success of the public health initiative; the partnership had to extend into the community.

Another interview, this one with the University of Pennsylvania’s Ira Harkavy, rounds out the articles on partnerships. Working for more than twenty years through the Netter Center for Community Partnerships, Harkavy and his colleagues have worked to encourage collaborations between universities and communities. They do this through “a problem-solving form of service learning. Penn students, faculty members, community residents, and even K-12 students work together to help solve universal problems ... as they present themselves locally.” Harkavy’s work, along with that of his colleagues,

is designed to lessen the gap between the community of West Philadelphia and the university. Harkavy acknowledges this isn't an easy task, especially given the still dominant disciplinary and market orientations of higher education. Becoming a "permanent anchor for revitalizing schools and communities" is one aim among many for the service work the university undertakes. Another is advancing the self-interest of some of his colleagues. Harkavy suggests that their work with the community enables them to realize "civic goals ... that motivated them to become academics in the first place."

Edith Manosevitch reviews *Democracy's Good Name* by Michael Mandelbaum for the *Exchange*. Mandelbaum's historical analysis of the evolution of democracy, Manosevitch explains, provides empirical evidence that democracy has always been accompanied by some form of market economy. It is the market economy that serves as a "school for democracy" by "embedding the values, habits, and attitudes ... that underlie a well-functioning democracy." Another factor at play, Mandelbaum suggests, is civil society. It "helps to further protect both popular sovereignty and liberty." While the promotion of democracy has long been the practice of the United States' foreign policy, its prospect for genuine adoption, he suggests, "depends on the durability of existing democracies."

David Mathews, in his "Afterword," asks, "What are institutions of higher education doing about 'the public and its problems?'" He goes on to hypothesize that there are two concepts of "citizens" at play in today's political climate. One conception of citizen is as consumer or client—ill-informed and easily swayed, an "impotent amateur in a world where expert professionals necessarily rule." The other conception is "citizen as producer of public work," or "solver of wicked problems in community." Higher education, he asserts, will have a say in whichever conception wins out over time.

This 2008 issue of the *Higher Education Exchange* is our nascent attempt to engage with everyday citizens and higher education professionals with a "citizen-centered" focus. We probably don't have it exactly right this time, but think of it as a first step. Let us know about the community-university or citizen-centered work you're engaging in. And help us hear the voices of the citizens in our shared endeavors.

THE JOURNEY OF A “RECOVERING PROFESSIONAL”

By David W. Brown

“Making believe!” cried Dorothy. “Are you not a great Wizard?”

“Hush, my dear,” he said; “don’t speak so loud. Or you will be overheard and I should be ruined. I’m supposed to be a great Wizard.”

“And aren’t you?” she asked.

“Not a bit of it, my dear; I’m just a common man.”

—*The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum

I recall my pleasure in being called a “real professional,” presumably someone who is exceptionally competent and self-effacing, when I directed the transition team of the new Koch administration in New York City. My counterpart, the deputy mayor of the outgoing administration, offered the compliment at the conclusion of our introductory meeting at City Hall. We were serving very different political leaders and agendas, but, first and foremost, we were professional colleagues. We knew we were good at what we did and that was all that really mattered.

When my work was in the public eye, however, I was struck with how often news stories—and that’s what we call them, “stories”—constructed accounts about what the “in-charge” world was doing that didn’t correspond to what I knew was actually going on. The very human need for storytelling too often abbreviates and distorts how things happen in that world as outsiders try to make sense of what insiders do. And all of them prefer to tidy up what would otherwise be a partial, or even incoherent, story. Too many accounts leave out the drift of events, procrastination, mistakes, revisions, and dumb luck that happen along the way.

We wrongly assume that those in charge—decision makers and their professional cadres—know what they’re doing from the outset, but the carelessly used term “problem solving” usually overstates what actually happens. When they talk about solving a problem what they actually mean is simply improving the situation. They are over their heads and far from shore. An outcome that emerges

may be some distance from the place where they started and may not resemble where they thought they were headed. As one sympathetic friend told me after I had experienced a particularly difficult week in City Hall, “Look, David, business does what is doable, government gets all the rest.”

I learned that whatever the outcome it is rarely a solution, and the story rarely finished, given the ceaseless flow of events that make and remake outcomes without end. We would like to think that one thing leads to another in a tidy sequential development,

but I found that there are many parallel developments that muddle the

story endlessly. An outcome more closely resembles an equilibrium, or as deftly phrased by one observer, “what there is after something has settled down, if something ever does settle down.” No sports metaphor is adequate to explain the complicated game that goes on. Whatever gets settled can become easily unsettled by other stakeholders



who insist on playing too. In such an unending game, no handshake agreement is self-executing. It requires many follow-on hands to get something done. As for those who think otherwise, like Dorothy, they are likely to discover just a little man behind the screen in the Throne Room of the Great Oz.

My journey, then, to overcome an addiction to “professionalism” began when I decided to leave the “Emerald City,” the in-charge world I knew, and the practice of law. I realized that for too long I had indulged a dangerous immodesty, believing that I had little to learn from anyone who was not my professional peer, even though I knew far less than what other people thought I did. Like most professionals, I had been content to work with a kind of unstated pretension and semblance of control. Being “professional” had been largely a state of mind in which I set the terms of my own confinement. With such a mindset, I came to realize that my professional life left something to be desired.

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So my journey took me to the mothership of professionalism, the American graduate school, which trains, socializes, and provides the credentials for would-be professionals—a place that primarily values not what you produce but *how* you produce it, a place exemplified by the solo lectures of an expert in the classroom. Despite working in this mind-shaping culture, my apostasy only deepened as my research became centered on the social dimensions of problem solving.

There, I shared with students whatever I could make of my experience, with cases and exercises to alert and prepare them for the in-charge world, which many of them aimed for. One of my teaching assistants observed that the body of work I created for the classroom had no “tidy-problem-with-a-tidy solution.” I also told them that the specialized methods they acquire in graduate school frequently appear to be closed systems to those who are not professionals. Although I made the case *for* the professional enterprise, I pointed out that it is deeply flawed. Why did I think it was so flawed? I told my students that although professionals, at their best, share and “solve” problems together in their respective professions or vocations, there is an obvious economic incentive for them to exclude those without such training and credentials. Consequently, this mindset leads many professionals to distance themselves from those whose interests they serve. When they cross over to the “in-charge” world, many persist in the habit of leaving their constituents out. This mindset can be profoundly antidemocratic when it presumes that one’s professional knowledge and experience is a sufficient substitute for a democratic process of participating equals. That was certainly true in my case.

By then, I had discovered a far more complicated world than the professional precincts I knew. I began to appreciate the giant jigsaw puzzle of interdependence in a public world where we account for the origins of most social problems, their trajectories, and whatever outcomes emerge. You might call it our “invisible hand.”

How things happen in our public world, the world we necessarily share with others, is not the story usually told by those in charge or by journalists who think they know where the action is. How things happen in our public world is a more complicated story. When I took a closer look at the social dimensions of problem solving, I discovered that the origins and outcomes of social problems are, to a large extent, determined by the action or inaction of



all of us as we impact public health, public safety, public education, race relations, the environment, and so much else. I came to appreciate that our *coordination* and *adaptation*, contingent behaviors that are driven by what others do, account for the *emergence* of most social outcomes, both good and bad—outcomes that are often not intended by any of us.

I wanted to dwell on this phenomenon with my students to make vivid our often hidden but powerful presence in the public world. What many keep missing is that the outcomes we see are often of our own making—something that certainly was not clear to me when I was in the Emerald City. I used numerous examples from everyday social and economic life, which helped clarify for my students that the action or inaction of countless people accounts for the origins of our social problems, their trajectories, and the outcomes that emerge.

I simulated our “invisible hand” with experiential exercises conducted outside the classroom. For that I created the Factory Hill story, set in an old textile city in New England, where graduate students “lived,” so to speak, during a semester. In Factory Hill, they confronted the threat of a hostile takeover of the leading employer in town, controversy about the homeless among them, and the civic shock of “terrorists” taking hostages at the downtown Old Fellows Club. Each semester, two sections, each with approximately sixty students, first analyzed, then entered “through the looking glass” into this public world, and with other role players produced outcomes in Factory Hill which always varied from one section to another and from one semester to another. The Factory Hill experience dramatized for my students that social problem solving is a complicated and uncertain enterprise with no one really in charge.

Having discovered our “invisible hand” in the public world, I became preoccupied with a need to understand how we find “enough others” to problem-solve rather than just live with the more or less accidental and unpredictable outcomes that otherwise emerge. “Enough others” is a simple way to label what is not a simple proposition. It is a threshold, but without any predetermined number that anyone can know in advance—it all depends. This realization led me to examine the “social scaffolds”—our networks and memberships, our public spaces (electronic as well as physical), our social conventions, and nascent movements—that we have for finding “enough others.” From churches to affinity groups, from web sites to workshops, from markets to consciousness-raising endeavors, from consumer credit unions to land trusts—the list is endless.

Social problem solving is a complicated and uncertain enterprise with no one really in charge.

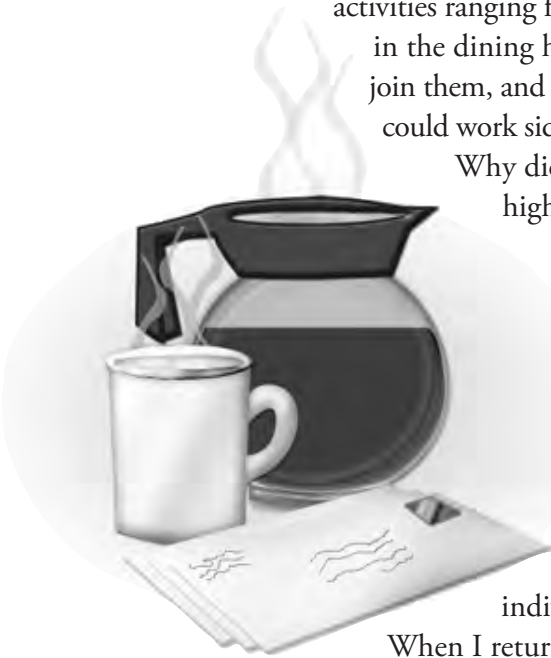
It took awhile, but I came to realize that such scaffolds are well-tested processes that promote adaptation and coordination when so many work and live in impersonal settings—scaffolds that serve as platforms, “weak ties,” and crossovers in the absence of tight-knit communities and neighborhoods. With the “scaffolds” we have, there have been very few social problems beyond our reach and influence when we find enough others to advance workers’ rights or civil liberties or gender equality or environmental conservation.

I began to use scaffolds when I became president of a small college in the Midwest. The lack of faculty interaction across departments troubled me. I decided to put a coffee pot and the departmental mail in one spot, knowing that new faculty collaborations might emerge. The coffee/mail intersection was only a scaffold, but I thought it essential to prompt collaborations that were of the faculty’s making, not mine. I also sought to reinvigorate the college’s work program, which I considered a much needed social scaffold for that community. The work program, administered entirely by students, required each of them to contribute 15 hours a week to keep the campus going, activities ranging from building a new library wing to serving food in the dining hall. Soon after arriving on campus, I decided to join them, and was assigned to various maintenance jobs, so we could work side by side on various campus problems that arose.

Why did I care? The prevailing learning environment in higher education tests students on their competitive abilities to survive on their own. I could see that the social scaffold of the work program offered a different kind of education—one that empowered them through the membership and daily enterprise they shared.

As a recovering professional, I was still a work-in-progress, but I could see that the answers are not just “out there” where power and expertise reside, nor “in here” where each individual resides. The answers lie “between us.”

When I returned to the mothership of a graduate school after my tenure as a college president, I became more determined than ever to counter the mind-shaping norm of an expert lecturing in front of a classroom. I had found that most professors, and many of their students, prefer that the professor maintain a substantial measure of *control* over the delivery of a course, both regarding the content and the grading of how well the content is understood. What was



becoming obvious to me is that, in a decentralized world, those in charge of both public institutions and private organizations—and, yes, those in front of a classroom—confront a quandary (perhaps best summed up by the oft-used example, “If only HP knew what HP knows”), a collective knowledge that too often is neglected. That’s why I wanted to experiment with an “open source” process with students and colleagues that connects everyone who wants to be connected, is open-ended, and is certainly less dominated by a professional mindset. I wanted to make the case that when we become “co-creators” with others, no one should feel cheated.

I put graduate students into “working groups” so they could experience thinking *with* others, rather than letting me or anyone else think *for* them, treating knowledge as a “social construct” and learning as a “social process.” I knew from experience that the most important asset professionals bring to problem solving is their “tacit knowledge” acquired in practice—experience that goes well beyond the formal knowledge acquired in their schooling. It follows, then, that “local knowledge”—the practical experience that those without academic credentials bring to a problem—also counts, and should be a necessary part of their problem solving together. The working group experience let graduate students take part in the search, trial and error, and process of discovery that any community of interest goes through before knowing what to do about its problems. It helped them appreciate that what emerges in a collaborative process is neither predictable nor merely the sum of individual contributions.

What I observed semester after semester and year after year was the example of women in their respective working groups helping the group work—together. I started to look more closely at the critical role that women are playing in other venues—in client relationships, when sharing as equals their resources with resource-poor communities, and by transforming classrooms and organizations from places where “I know better” to “let’s learn together.” I began to see that a cultural change is possible, led by women prepared to reject or modify the professional mindset that currently educates them, hires them, and evaluates them—a mindset predominately crafted by men, for men, in times past.

Over the years, I have learned from the graduate students I worked with, whose careers and lives I have followed, that a professional mindset can be in “persistent conflict” and capable of dramatic change. There is the partner in a private equity firm in

It helped them appreciate that what emerges in a collaborative process is neither predictable nor merely the sum of individual contributions.

Denver and his wife, an independent documentary filmmaker, who share in a “heavy dose of not-for-profit endeavors.” I get word from a director of policy and planning at a major health insurer in Hawaii that she is working on her second master’s degree, this one in bioethics, via the Internet. From D.C. comes news of a former student now at the World Bank, “restless and undergoing self-examination.” Another from Atlanta tells me about “seeking balance, creativity, and testing new ground.”

There is a universe of urban professionals, analysts, specialists, consultants, strategists, planners, and the like; “public servants” sensing that something different is called for.

There is a universe of urban professionals, analysts, specialists, consultants, strategists, planners, and the like; “public servants” sensing that something different is called for; social entrepreneurs, receptive to new ways of pursuing their agendas; those in higher education looking for better reasons for pursuing a lifetime career in the academy; students in the midst of assessing not only what they want to do but who they want to be; and some nine million women who have graduate degrees pursuing professional and related occupations which will grow faster in the next ten years than any other major occupational group.

At the heart of our prevailing professional culture is widespread agreement about what is important and how to behave, but a culture can change as circumstances change. In a curious turn, I think this is starting to happen in our increasingly decentralized world, where problem solving is becoming more collaborative and power more distributed. Legislation, regulation, and funding are far from enough. The jigsaw puzzle of the public world has millions of pieces. We may not all be equal in capacity and influence, but we are all needed.

My journey from the Emerald City was to a place that any of us can discover for ourselves—a place where everyone counts. This is also the journey of an increasing number of professionals, who are bringing a new mindset to social problem solving. They understand the importance of reaching out to others and treating them as equals. Their example curbs the pretensions of anyone, professional or not, that he knows better without first engaging others and learning together in the ongoing narrative they share. It is a place that too many in government, the large nonprofits, and higher education have yet to discover.

Listen, can you hear it? Like a marching band far down the road, the music of our public world on the move again. Listen, it’s getting closer. There, can you see it? The parade comes into sight.

THE SCHOLARSHIP OF COMMUNITY PARTNER VOICE

By Sean Creighton

I was near the final stages of my doctoral program, determined to produce research that would make a meaningful contribution to the field of civic engagement in higher education. I was working with my mentor, Dr. Ned Sifferlen, retired president of Sinclair Community College, participating in a series of discussions with higher education leaders, and researching several civic initiatives and organizations, like Campus Compact, the Fitz Center for Leadership in Community at the University of Dayton, and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at the University of Maryland. The discussions, research, and insights from the literature on civic engagement converged, creating a pathway to my “aha” moment.

On reflection, suddenly it seemed obvious that the scholarship on campus-community partnerships lacked a deep understanding of community-partner perspectives. I had read numerous, passing comments in articles that identified a lack of understanding of community partners. For instance, O’Meara and Kilmer in *Mapping Civic Engagement* concluded that, while there were many national efforts that engaged institutions in university-community partnerships, few of the initiatives really focused on building relationships with community partners, much less on projects that increased the civic capacity of those community organizations and the individuals they served. In the Pew Partnership for Civic Change’s publication *New Directions in Civic Engagement: University Avenue Meets Main Street*, one author noted that supporters of university-community partnerships “too often overlook the community’s perspective on the features of effective university engagement.” In another article, *Community Involvement in Partnerships with Educational Institutions, Medical Centers, and Utility Companies*, the researchers commented that “much of the literature on partnerships between anchor institutions and communities focus on the institutions rather than on the community perspective.” Wergin and Braskamp noted in their article *Forming Social Partnerships* from *The Responsive University: Restructuring for Higher Performance*, that “faculty members

often lack experiential knowledge of issues being addressed,” illustrating that faculty can learn from the surrounding community organizations.

Along with the insights from the literature, there was also the following pivotal moment during an ethnographic case study I was conducting. A group of students was developing a shared vision for local neighborhoods as part of a community-building project. During a public presentation of the shared vision, a community member stood and thanked the students for their work and commitment to strengthening the neighborhoods. He then asked, “What now? You’ve worked with us to develop the shared vision —how will you stay involved?”

The students replied that the semester was over and, essentially, their work was done. In that moment, I understood that the students did not realize the expectations community members had for sustained engagement. I had found my dissertation research question: *What do community organizations look*



for (and expect) in a successful civic engagement partnership with higher education institutions?

Engaging the community partners

The finished dissertation is entitled *Community Partner Indicators of Engagement: An Action Research Study on Campus-Community Partnership*. The research design and process sought to understand the expectations, needs, desires, and perceptions of community organizations that had partnered with several colleges and universities in the Greater Dayton region of Ohio. The unique aspect of this study was that the indicators were generated by the community organizations participating as stakeholders in campus-community partnerships. The conversations with the participating community organization leaders were candid, raw, and real. I engaged participants in a collaborative process of critical inquiry that resulted in truth-telling sessions on how community organizations felt about their higher education partners. The study has made a relevant contribution to the scholarship on campus-community partnerships by giving voice to different perspectives of civic engagement.

The participants developed ten community-partner indicators of engagement to be used in negotiating and assessing their campus-community partnerships (download the complete Community Partner Indicators of Engagement at www.soche.org/councils/scholarship.asp). They did this

through a process that included individual interviews and multiple group conferencing sessions. To ensure the indicators reflected an accurate and fair representation of the community-partner perspectives, the participants reviewed the language at every stage of development.

For each indicator, the participants developed associated effective and ineffective descriptors. For example, the participants discussed extensively their experience with service-learning programs, which resulted in the indicator *usefulness of service learning*. While service learning was revered in the literature and was becoming a commonly adopted pedagogy, the participants in the study exposed a different perspective on service learning. While they supported its impact on student learning and development, they also perceived serious issues and “felt used by service-learning programs.” One participant from a small nonprofit that serves teenagers drew nods from the others when she said:

Yesterday when I got back to the office ... one of my staff came in and said they got sixteen calls from interns—students from University B. It was a class of social workers. They came to class and were given a list of agencies to call for a 32-hour placement ... my assistant called the professor and said, “Stop it.” ... That’s just rude and lazy on the part of the faculty. There’s no preparation for the students or advanced discussion with the agencies. While we want to assist, we cannot do 32-hour placements ... we need to do police background checks on anyone that works in our programs.

Another participant from an organization that worked with women added that the universities rarely reimburse the community partners for the cost of the background checks, which adds a financial burden to the community partner. Yet another participant from a social service agency identified student entitlement as a common problem, adding:

The students, especially the undergraduate students, come in and they have this entitlement ... and I know this from my own children, who are very successful, but they do have this certain entitlement mentality and, for better or for worse, whatever the generation is called, I think that’s part of it.

There were positive comments as well from participants regarding the relationships, and the importance of building relationships with faculty to ensure a valuable experience for students:

What I see working for me is the relationship I have with University B. But, it’s Professor A and not the university ... he calls me and says, “I’ve got this student who’s great in community building and that’s all she wants to do” ... and

then I get a call from Professor B, who's a wonderful individual, and she hand picks students for us. So, it's truly those relationships, then, that begin to work, in terms of understanding what's expected and the matching that we talk about ... those are personal relationships with individuals who know the agency, who know what we do, who know the quality of supervision and the kind of supervision that's available, and the university is kind of almost out of the picture.

In developing the indicators, participants tried to balance their experiences to portray a constructive perspective. For example, the indicator *usefulness of service learning* detailed the positive and the negative descriptors:

INDICATOR	EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
Usefulness of Service Learning	• Mandates fair distribution of service-learning placements to all neighborhoods that are part of the community • Organizes a system for instructing students about service and for coordinating effective placement in cooperation with community partner • Provides helpful and typically low-cost labor by undergraduate students • Provides graduate student expertise to address community-partner needs and share new academic knowledge with community-partner staff • Views students as role models for the constituencies being served by community partner • Hires students to become employees of the community partner	• Discriminates against providing student service in areas based on race, class, and safety concerns • Permits sense of student entitlement • Fails to recognize that under-prepared undergraduate students tax community partner personnel, placing an increased strain on the infrastructure • Shifts service-learning purpose from community-centered to student-centered • Treats community partners as merely a laboratory • Depends on community partner excessively, resulting in too many students calling for interviews, information, and placement

Participants felt "disrespected" by higher education partners, expressing the opinion that higher education had an "elitist attitude."



During the study, the participants discussed in detail their feelings about relationships with local colleges and universities and, in particular, faculty. Participants felt “disrespected” by higher education partners, expressing the opinion that higher education had an “elitist attitude.” The participants recognized that faculty and higher education leaders might not have intentionally sought to create ill will or instill negative feelings in their community partners. In fact, these feelings “may stem from a misunderstanding between differing professional cultures,” a participant commented. Consequently, they saw the remedy being a process that engages campuses and their community partners in discussions that alleviate feelings of mistrust, disrespect, and inferiority.

Further, the participants viewed institutions of higher education as well funded, powerful, and uniquely situated community assets that had significant leverage. In comparison, the participants viewed their own organizations as similarly critical assets to the community, yet struggling, in some cases, to survive. The participants expected higher education to help address community-wide issues more overtly. As one participant said:

It is like you have these huge institutions that are viewed as great community assets, but as a university and as an institution, they don't see any part of that role. Yes, they make in-kind contributions, but they do not truly apply their knowledge, research, and financial leverage to broader community initiatives. They think, “We're a university ... by nature of being a university, we are giving to the community.” That is not enough.

While the participants held, in their own words, “a deep respect and appreciation for academic rigor,” they also felt that higher education did not, also in their own words, “have a deep appreciation for practice and for application.” There was an expressed concern from participants that “there's not a real intentionality to ensure that the academic knowledge is applied in a sustainable way in communities of need that will impact the quality of life.” These experiences were reflected in several of the indicators, for example *relevance of research*:

The participants commented that the long-term effectiveness of campus-community engagement would be significantly enhanced if higher education approached partnerships from a standpoint of equality.

INDICATOR	EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
Relevance of Research	• Reflects the priorities of the community partner's research needs • Produces applicable research outcomes and trend data, increasing a community partner's knowledge of its direct service to constituents • Provides research as a partnership, waiving overhead rates and associated fees • Partners on funding for research on community health and wellness that improves direct service programs regionally • Integrates existing models of practice and academic knowledge, enriching relevancy of both theoretical scholarship and direct service	• Produces research that places stress on community partner infrastructure • Strains the already limited resources of the community partner through an exhaustive research process • Redirects substantial funds toward evaluation research that could otherwise support direct service programs • Impacts negatively a community partner's constituency by charging for research when it could otherwise be provided in-kind • Perpetuates ignorance about a community partner's constituency through shallow research

The participants commented frequently that the long-term effectiveness of campus-community engagement would be significantly enhanced if higher education approached partnerships from a standpoint of equality. Unfortunately, they felt “ignored” by higher education, noting, “there has to be fair acknowledgement of the value of each partner.” Participants expressed their sincere gratitude toward campuses that included them in the entire process. For the participants, a productive process provides the opportunity to dialogue with peers, reflect on the meaning of effective campus-community partnerships, and agree on action steps that improve





One participant suggested: “We need a manifesto, a bill of rights, something that says we have come together, we have looked at partnerships, what we expect, and here it is.”

campus-community relationships. In some cases, they felt that it was critical to make explicit from each perspective the purpose for forming the partnership and to spend substantial time working on communications. One participant thought the “whole key is getting everything in writing” and another believed that “you trust your partners, but you also make sure that everybody understands the ground rules. Once everybody understands the ground rules, you write them down.” One participant suggested creating a manifesto:

We need a manifesto—a bill of rights; something that says we have come together, we have looked at partnerships, what we expect, and here it is. Now, we want you to be a partner, we want you to play, but we’ve got to be on equal footing or it does not equal a partnership. We want to make the partnership real, and it is not real now.

To ensure that faculty and administrators understood the importance of these observations, the participants decided it was necessary to develop the indicators *clarity of expectations and roles* and *effectiveness of communication*:

INDICATOR	EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
Clarity of Expectations and Roles	• Outlines expectations and outcomes in writing, including specific check-in points to assess progress • Identifies and commits to equal sharing of resources • Provides explicit documentation necessary to sustain the process	• Fails to recognize that community partner has expectations

INDICATOR	EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
Effectiveness of Communications	• Values honesty, transparency, openness, and sustained communication • Identifies decision makers for achieving goals that are central to partnership • Develops personal relationships between participating individuals • Creates a forum for conversations between both parties to engage in a dialogue that helps establish mutualism • Communicates and adheres to best practices, resulting in improved collaboration and a better understanding of each other's needs, perspectives, and effect on the community	• Ignores community partner's opinions, creating a fundamental communication gap • Makes it difficult for community partner to determine with whom or what department to discuss and plan for partnerships • Operates in bureaucratic systems that prevent collaboration and/or make working together difficult, creating unwarranted interference, challenges, and barriers

Advocating for community partners

Too often, participants voiced a concern that there was a “fundamental communication gap” and that a “lack of understanding drives the universities’ inability to organize themselves to make better use of what we have to offer in the community.” One



participant said, “We need common forums where we can talk and arrive at some mutual understanding, and then drive some changes over

time.” Unsatisfied with merely developing the indicators of engagement, the participants moved on to creating solutions to several issues that emerged from the research process. This reflected the action-oriented nature of these leaders. One participant put it succinctly, “Alright, I guess I’ve been sitting here trying to figure out how this is all going to be perceived by the academic community. I believe this is a wonderful opportunity to bring resolutions about.” While another one echoed, “Well, maybe. I think, perhaps, there’s another section that talks about resolution ... (or) what we, as nonprofit leaders, would like to see happen.”

After hearing these calls for improvements, we added a section to the document called “resolutions.” This final part of the research process turned the passion and voice of the participants into action to improve their relationships with higher education institutions. The seven resolutions included:

RESOLUTIONS	
Community-Partner Collaboration	Form community-partner collaborative that develops policy, procedures, actions, and outcomes for higher education to adhere to when doing business with community partners; begin by exploring the concept of the collaborative by working with the Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education and Alliance of Executives
Memorandum of Understanding	Establish unified community-partner memorandum of understanding addressing community partner’s expectations and benefits, outlining meaningful expectations of student service, including quid pro quo for educational services rendered by community partner
Service Learning	Create clearinghouse database that shares service-learning opportunities available to students and promotes fair distribution of student service throughout the entire community
Academic Research	Create clearinghouse database that promotes community partner’s specific research needs, consequently increasing relevancy of research
Partner Constituency	Improve faculty relations and student placement to help situate the dignity and humanity of the people being served by the community partners so future professionals will understand their value and worth and researchers will exhibit their humanness
Building Dialogue	Distribute Community-Partner Indicators of Engagement to faculty and nonprofit leaders, bringing them together to discuss gaps in perception and how the differences can be addressed; and/or program a conference on “What Makes Community Partnership Work?” in an effort to engage higher education in listening and understanding the community-partner perspective as well as establish a dialogue that bridges campus and community
Coeducation	Approach a nontraditional college/university to partner in the cocreation of a curriculum for a graduate degree program specifically designed for nonprofit leaders and coconstructed by community partners and higher education faculty

These resolutions represented agreed-upon actions to address the key challenges that emerged from the process. The resolutions essentially provided steps for progressive changes aimed at improving civic partnerships between community partners and higher education. Specifically, they indicated the participants' willingness to give time, energy, and intellectual capacity to work collaboratively with one another and with higher education leaders. The resolutions reiterated the participants' belief in the value of civic engagement and campus-community partnerships. As much as the participants felt undervalued or misunderstood, they believed progress would only be achieved if they could work together with colleges and universities to address perceived challenges.

I came to this study firmly valuing colleges and universities that practice civic engagement over institutions that do not consider civic engagement as part of their mission, purpose, teaching, and research. As much as I wished that the results reinforced only positive perceptions of higher education's civic-engagement efforts, I had to remain faithful to the perspectives of the community partners. Hence, I shared the *Community Partner Indicators of Engagement* with the higher education community, believing campus leaders would accept the research and make improvements as a result. I promoted the findings to a broad network of leadership in higher education. When I presented the research at several conferences and submitted articles based on the research to a highly respected academic journal, I encountered new obstacles. While my dissertation chair and committee, as well as other respected authors and researchers in the field of civic engagement, applauded the work, other faculty questioned the results and the validity, wondering what types of organizations participated. At one conference, a person asked if I worked with religious organizations. Other scholars questioned the size of the sample and the overall research design; still others raised concerns regarding the role of the researcher and the jointly-derived results. Some even challenged whether action research was appropriate, saying it didn't provide a "theoretical framework."

I am not shaken by the reluctance of some to accept this research. The study raises legitimate concerns regarding civic engagement practices as perceived by community partners. Knowing that community organizations are vital local assets that have existed, in some cases, for as long as many of our nation's colleges and universities, it is, therefore, important to continue to

*It is important
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partners.*

advocate for a deeper understanding of community partners. If higher education seeks to make long lasting, valuable contributions in their communities, then campus leaders must listen closely to their community partners. Kent Keith, editor of *The Responsive University: Restructuring for Higher Performance*, wrote in the conclusion, “it is when the activities of our colleges and universities are aligned with the highest-priority needs of society that we will have the greatest positive impact.” Such an alignment comes from a place of complete engagement. One of the community participants in this study similarly commented, “you’ve got to have, I think, some sort of commonality in your mission, or at least be complementary in your mission, for your partnership to be given a chance to succeed.” This notion is illustrated by the indicator *mission compatibility*, which states that an effective partnership “flourishes because of compatibility of missions, creating a meaningful and complementary intersect.”

CHANGING PUBLIC CULTURE

An Interview with Marguerite S. Shaffer

David Brown, coeditor of the Higher Education Exchange, spoke with Marguerite S. Shaffer about her work as director of American studies and associate professor of American studies and history at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

Brown: Your current work focuses on public culture in the United States. And so ...

Shaffer: For the past five years I have been seeking ways to integrate my scholarly and teaching interests with larger questions and concerns about the role of higher education, specifically the role of American studies, in preparing students to become engaged citizens and public leaders. I began my tenure as director of American studies at Miami by applying for an NEH Humanities Focus Grant to reassess and revise the curriculum in American studies. Not only was the existing curriculum outdated, but it seemed a little irrelevant to the current needs and concerns of Miami students. I felt the program would benefit from a closer examination of the core intellectual ideas and learning objectives of the field. Specifically, I wanted to really think about what American studies could offer to students and faculty confronting the concerns of our current culture.

In 2002-2003, the Miami American Studies Program was one of twenty-five humanities departments nationwide to be awarded one of these grants. The dialogue this grant supported helped to spearhead a larger discussion about public culture as a central theme in American studies. It spun off into an academic symposium on the transformation of public culture, which resulted in my forthcoming edited volume of *Public Culture: Diversity, Democracy, and Community in the United States* to be published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in June 2008, as well as a prototype, multiyear curricular initiative, "Acting Locally: Civic Learning and Leadership in Southwest Ohio," which was funded by the Harry T. Wilks Leadership Institute at Miami.

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To be perfectly honest, though, I must confess that my turn to public culture stems from a more personal uncertainty about my efficacy and worth as an American studies scholar.

Brown: Please go on ...

Shaffer: I have joked with colleagues that I am in the midst of an academic midlife crisis—questioning every aspect of life in academe. In thinking about my future in the university, I have wondered whether my time will be well spent researching and writing a scholarly monograph that might well get me promoted, but that will be read by only a handful of like-minded scholars with similar intellectual interests. I have questioned the time I devote to teaching critical thinking skills to students who are socialized, both inside and outside the university, to care more about their final grades and potential career options than the knowledge they can share and the collective future they will create. As a parent of two young children, I look out to the world and worry about what their futures will be as President Bush and his administration systematically undermine all the American—not just American, the humane—values I hold dear, like “you don’t lie,” “you don’t attack people unprovoked,” “you don’t torture people”—basic stuff. I wonder if my work in the academy is paving the way for a culture I want my children to inherit. On very bad days, I think not. So, I think about public culture as a way to alleviate these uncertainties.

Brown: In your introduction to *Public Culture* you speak of your struggle “to promote both cultural competency and cultural agency” as an American studies scholar. Is this part of your “questioning every aspect of life in academe,” including your own field?

Shaffer: Most definitely, yes. For the past 20 to 30 years, cultural studies theory has been the driving force in American studies scholarship. Although postmodern theory emerged as part of a politically charged intellectual commitment to egalitarian social change, it has evolved into a kind of cultural or identity politics focusing on the “Other” and interrogating subaltern subjectivity. Much good has come from this work in terms of redressing racism and sexism and empowering marginalized groups to value their distinct cultures. However, the primary focus of this theoretical perspective has elevated “difference” over every other cultural category. In exploring American culture, American studies as a field trains students to examine and dissect issues of social difference—race, class, gender, ethnicity—and to understand theories of hegemony and ideology. In other words, students are taught to deconstruct

American culture—they can closely read and parse all sorts of cultural texts, they can critique power structures, and unravel ideological stances and systems—but they are given few tools or opportunities to move beyond critique to create communities or support or even imagine cultural belonging.

For the past four years, I have team-taught an introductory course in American studies with my colleague, Mary Kupiec Cayton. Semester after semester, we have found that students have made incredible strides in terms of being able to read, write, understand, and critique American culture. But we have also found that at the end of each semester, students leave the course with little hope about the possibilities for changing or impacting American culture—their culture. They have little sense of themselves as shapers of culture. They have little sense of their connection to American culture. It's almost as if they feel like victims or prisoners of American culture. They see themselves as outside of or beyond the culture they have been studying, like it is not about them. They gain critical thinking skills, but they don't see themselves as active members of their own culture. They don't see themselves as cultural agents.

I think the university reinforces this. The liberal arts curriculum, at least at Miami, is still broadly conceptualized in the traditional enlightenment context of knowledge for the sake of knowledge. But as the culture has become increasingly privatized, knowledge is reduced to a credential in the market place rather than a foundation for engaged citizenship and public leadership. So students come to the university so that they can get what they need to find a good job. They understand knowledge and critical thinking skills

as bargaining chips in the free market. I struggle to get them to see knowledge as a form of power that can allow them to shape the world in which they will live, in which they *do live*. I struggle to get them to see the connections between knowledge and action. So I guess to answer your question, I see a real tension between theory and practice in American studies. Postmodern theory has reached a point where it has almost negated the possibility of conscious, meaningful individual action. Yet, more than ever, our communities need



active participants rather than passive victims or detached critics. So the struggle for me has been how to use the critical perspective of cultural theory to promote, rather than undermine, cultural agency.

Brown: Obviously, you take some exception to a prevailing emphasis in American studies on the issues of “difference and identity,” with insufficient attention paid to “belonging, collective life, and community.” What encourages you that a shift toward “a shared public culture,” as you have put it, is gaining ground in your field?

Shaffer: First, let me say that I think that much of the scholarship in American studies focusing on diversity and difference has been extremely important and necessary work. My concept of the public very much depends on the vision of a multicultural society moved forward by this scholarship. However, I believe it is important not to completely abandon the idea of shared public culture or cultures to the divided concerns of identity politics.

I think, in general, the notion of “a shared public culture” is a little too monolithic and idealistic. And I am definitely not interested in a return to the old Cold War view of American exceptionalism. I think shared public cultures can emerge, but they are temporal and provisional, more “process” than “thing.” It is probably more accurate to say there seems to be a growing interest in the concept of the public.

Probably the most encouraging evidence I can provide is not hard evidence, but rather the response I have had from students and other scholars who are anxious to address public issues. In developing the new major in American studies and providing students with opportunities to engage in communities, I have found that students are transformed when they have the opportunity to put their learning in a larger public context. Similarly, faculty feel like they are using their scholarly expertise to engage real-world issues.

But if you need hard evidence, perhaps the most telling is the thematic focus for the next annual American Studies Convention. The title for the conference is “Back Down to the Crossroads: Integrative American Studies in Theory and Practice.” The call for papers requests proposals that address how American studies scholars can and have integrated their roles as scholars, educators, and citizens.

Probably the most developed and institutionalized example of this kind of scholarly work in American studies is the Imagining America Project, which is a national consortium of colleges and universities that promotes public scholarship in the arts and humanities.

I get some sense of hope watching my students and seeing what has happened with them as they have become more involved in their communities.

But there are other examples on a smaller scale, such as the American studies program at the University of Wyoming, which specializes in training students to engage in public sector work. The American Studies Association also has a community partnership grant program to facilitate this kind of engaged work. Recently funded projects range from a service-learning project with the New Mexico Office of the State Historian to an exhibition of creative work done by young African American residents in the Arbor Hill neighborhood of Albany, New York.

So from my own personal experience to the larger institutional frameworks of the field, I think there is a growing interest in issues relating to the public.

Brown: More importantly, what evidence encourages you that such a shift is gaining ground, not just in American studies but in American life, which you say “increasingly revolves around entertainment, advertising, consumption, spectacle, and image”?

Shaffer: This one I’m not sure I can answer. I go back and forth. Some days, when I interact with people who are involved in trying to better their communities, I have real hope. Other days, when I look at our current political situation, I wonder if I am simply delusional. I have no hard evidence either way. But I get some sense of hope watching my students and seeing what has happened with them as they have become more involved in their communities.

In my scholarly work on tourism, I have argued that tourists are not simply dupes or passive consumers of commercial advertising and popular media. I believe that because I do not think of myself as a victim of global consumer capitalism. I am trying to push back. I think—I hope—others are trying to push back as well.

Brown: As you may know, the Kettering Foundation has a long-standing concern that the professional mindset prevailing in higher education too often ignores the



“common goods” that only democratic self-rule can provide. Can such a mindset sometimes produce divisions among your colleagues in American studies?

I prefer the concept of the public in contrast to the concept of national identity or national character.

Shaffer: I would not say that the “professional mindset” necessarily produces divisions among my colleagues, but I do think that the way in which the university has institutionalized professional standards most definitely works against a broader notion of shared democratic knowledge production and dissemination, and the way it might be defined in American studies. The bureaucratic process of tenure and promotion, and the narrow compartmentalization of teaching, scholarship, and service, works against the very interdisciplinary and engaged work that can be done in American studies. Perhaps there might be conflict among my colleagues if the university criteria for tenure and promotion defined teaching, scholarship, and service in a more integrated and holistic way. Then I could potentially see those advocating traditional scholarship and teaching questioning faculty members interested in pushing the boundaries of the scholarship of engagement. But the university has basically cast “the professional mindset” in stone and, although it might encourage innovative community-based, engaged, or public work, professional guidelines for tenure and promotion relegate that kind of work to service, which counts third, way behind scholarship and teaching, in terms of tenure and promotion. What that means for American studies faculty is that, first and foremost, you need a scholarly monograph and good teaching that fits into a standardized three-credit-hour framework; then you can do creative public work above and beyond all that. For a junior faculty member, I just don’t see that as feasible. In fact, for myself, I know that time spent on public work is time taken from the scholarly work I need to complete to get promoted. The university guidelines are clear. So the issue of conflict is moot.

Brown: So the “professional mindset” rules. What a dreary prospect. Let me move on to more positive ground. You speak of “public culture” not as “an end in and of itself,” but rather “an ongoing process.” Could you elaborate on what such a process consists of?

Shaffer: I think there is a desire to see the public or publics as a thing or an entity—an ideal of a participatory democratic society completely conscious of its shared endeavor to create and maintain some sort of shared identity and common goals. But I prefer the concept of the public in contrast to the concept of national identity or national character—concepts that used to be central to the American studies endeavor—as a public less fixed and monolithic, more fluid and adaptable, more provisional and temporal. Publics

shift and change; they respond to specific issues and events; they are diverse and divided.

My conceptualization of the public is derived from Hannah Arendt and John Dewey in the context of my training in American studies. In particular, I think Arendt's image of the public realm as a table around which diverse individuals come together to discuss and debate, to arrive at some sort of common understanding, best embodies how I have come to imagine who constitutes the public or publics. It suggests that every individual is a potential member of a public, and he or she becomes so when he or she begins to engage with other individuals to create shared meaning—even if

only temporarily. What Dewey adds to this is the idea

that although liberalism (and here I am referring to the political philosophy of liberalism) has conditioned us to believe

that society all boils down to the individual, in actuality, the individual is completely dependent on and connected to others. My readings of Arendt and Dewey are filtered

through concepts of culture that are central to American studies; specifically, the idea that culture is the shared signs, symbols, codes, messages, and contexts that give our individual experi-

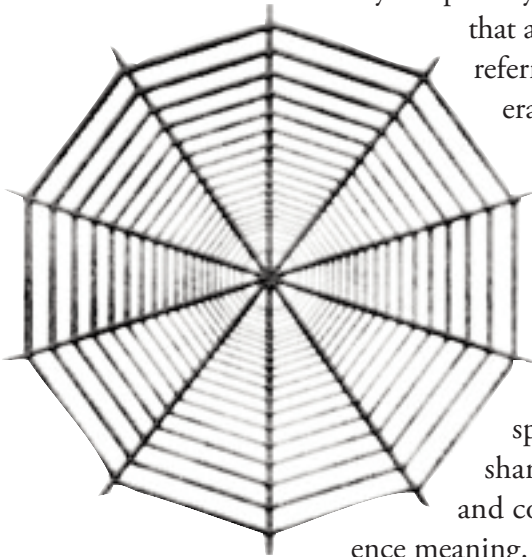
ence meaning. Clifford Geertz has this wonderful

image of culture as a kind of spider web. He says that culture is the web of significance in which we are suspended. For me Geertz's web is very similar to Arendt's table.

So, when I say that I see the public as a process, I see it as the process of creating, negotiating, debating, and contesting shared meaning. It is culture-making. It is the act of coming together, or meeting around the table, that brings publics into being. So, I guess I would have to say that when I am talking about publics, I am ultimately talking about the process of public discourse—individuals coming together to discuss, debate, resolve, challenge an issue, address an event, or respond to a problem.

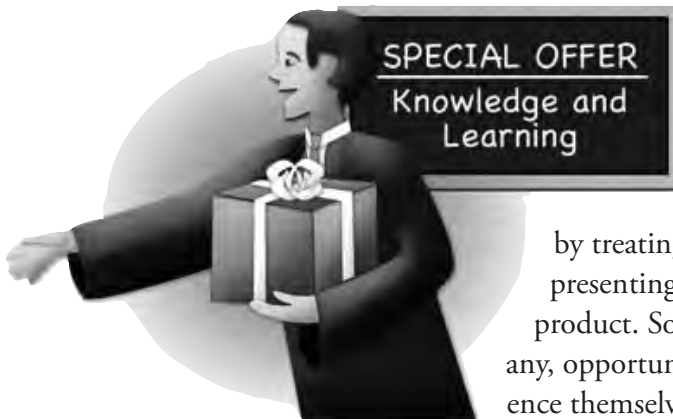
Brown: Why, then, do students not see themselves as potential participants in culture-making?

Shaffer: The key words here are "potential participants." For the past thirty years, basically since the election of Ronald Reagan,



College students simply reflect the values of our present-day culture.

our culture has become increasingly privatized. The private sphere and the free market have come to dominate civil society or as William Galston has put it, the market has become the “organizing metaphor” for everyday experience. In the process, the concept of the public has become anemic and withered. College students simply reflect the values of our present-day culture. They have been socialized at every turn to understand and think of themselves and their role in society in privatized and individualized terms. They have been conditioned and encouraged to think of culture-making as self-fashioning, self-fulfillment, and self-improvement. They don’t see themselves as participants in a public process. They don’t



really imagine themselves as part of a public; rather they are facebook friends, fans, members of a market segment, part of an identity group. The university encourages this

by treating students like customers and presenting knowledge and learning as a product. So students are given few, if any, opportunities to imagine and experience themselves in public terms.

Brown: Let’s turn to your “Acting Locally” project in southwestern Ohio. It “explores the intersections between globalization and local transformation.” One of the three communities that are the focus of the project is the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood in Cincinnati. Could you say more about how “globalization” impacts such a community?

Shaffer: At the turn of the 19th century, Over-the-Rhine (OTR) was home to over 40,000 residents who lived and worked in the city. It was one of the most densely populated and diverse neighborhoods in the Midwest. It supported a diversified manufacturing economy in the metropolitan area that produced machine tools, paper, shoes, and soap, among other products. The neighborhood and the city were vitally linked to an interconnected local, regional, and national economy. Globalization has transformed the social and economic landscape of southwestern Ohio in the past half century. The diversified manufacturing economy of the 19th century and early 20th century has all but disappeared. Although Cincinnati is still home base to a number of multinational corporations, the local and regional economy is suffering.

Downtown Cincinnati has sought to rehabilitate its economic base through tourism with the construction of two new stadiums, the renovation of the convention center, and the creation of the Underground Railroad Freedom Center. And although tourism can attract visitors and provide some revenue, it creates predominantly low-paying service sector jobs, caters to outsiders, and effectively transforms metropolitan residents into visitors, audience, and spectators. The present status of OTR reflects some of the deficiencies of this tourist-based solution. The neighborhood is currently home to approximately 7,500 residents, almost 75% of whom are African Americans living below the poverty line. The neighborhood has been plagued by drug trafficking, violent crime, and widespread poverty. There are approximately 106 social service agencies serving OTR, and there are approximately 500 abandoned buildings. As the largest residential neighborhood directly adjacent to the downtown core, Over-the-Rhine is vital to the health of downtown Cincinnati.

Brown: In constructing such a project it seems to me there is a “hegemonic” assumption, as you might put it, that globalization undermines or overwhelms local cultures. Since you have been critical of postmodern theory “which effectively denies the possibilities of public culture,” is your project aimed at challenging such an assumption and countering such theory?

Shaffer: Last summer, Nan Kari from the Jane Addams School for Democracy said to me that theory presents a mindset and a way of thinking that is almost antithetical to public action and engagement. We were talking about a student who had been interning at the Jane Addams School, and who had then gone on to write a senior thesis about her experience drawing on postmodern feminist theory. I had talked to the student while visiting the Jane Addams School, and it struck me that she was struggling to reconcile her transformative experience at Jane Addams with her critical assessment of the Jane Addams School. I can relate to that. When I look at the world through the lens of theory, I see no way out. From this perspective, globalization is, in many ways, hegemonic; but within this theoretical construct, you could also say that there are counterhegemonic forces working to challenge and transform the global power structure.

So, I guess I would have to say “yes and no” in answer to your question. Yes, in some ways, I think one of the implicit goals of the Acting Locally project is to empower local communities—to get students to understand that they can partner with community mem-

It is time for academics to move beyond theory to begin to imagine new ways of creating and using knowledge.

bers to be agents of change; to promote and support participatory democratic action; to connect knowledge and power. Within the theoretical construct, this might be seen as counterhegemonic.

But, I also have to say no, because, like Terry Eagleton, I believe it is time for academics to move beyond theory to begin to imagine new ways of creating and using knowledge. So in many ways I see this project as more of a prototype for integrative learning that asks students and faculty to use knowledge and critical thinking not simply to judge and critique, but as a foundation on which to act in the world and to imagine, as Terry Eagleton says, new forms of belonging.

Brown: Part of the strategy for the project is “to identify and study key components of existing sustainable communities in the region.” What “key components” have you found thus far? And assuming you have, what “mechanisms” are being developed that will help to maintain and expand such communities?

Shaffer: Having begun to engage with these communities, “key components” now sounds a little abstract and detached from the life and soul of the communities; it reads like academic-speak. What we have found is that there are a range of people, from individual activists to those working for social service organizations, to others working in nonprofit organizations, who have done incredible work in seeking to better their communities. Whether it be Lourdes Leon, owner of Taqueria Mercado, who has opened

her bakery to students involved in a language exchange program, or the sisters at Venice-on-Vine who have

worked with students to help create a job internship program, or the members of the MOON co-op who are partnering with students to help support a local food economy in Oxford, there are all sorts of people out there seeking to support and sustain their communities.



As the project has evolved, what we have found is that we can support these individuals and organizations by facilitating conversations, making connections, doing some of the background legwork, and providing support for ongoing projects. So I guess if I had to name a mechanism to maintain and support such communities, it would be the *partnership mechanism*, which I liken to building Hannah Arendt's table—defining a third space that exists beyond the university, that incorporates and draws upon the assets of everyday community, providing opportunities for a range of diverse individuals to connect, talk, and imagine solutions. The partnership allows people to come together and brainstorm, and figure out ways to implement solutions, reframe issues, and make connections.

Brown: What are some other specifics that will help me understand the partnership mechanism as it developed between your students, faculty colleagues, and community members?

Shaffer: Although, from the start, we wanted to work together with community members to address community issues, I think it took a while for us to sort that out. The academic model is grounded on scholar experts collecting and examining the data and then solving the problem. It was hard to imagine beyond that model when we first started. But now, as the project has moved forward, it is centered on partnerships, and the individuals and organizations in the three communities are key to those partnerships.

In Hamilton, we began by building on the relationships Professor Shelly Bromberg had developed with the Latino community. Shelly introduced students to Lourdes Leon, owner of Taqueria Mercado. Leon connected students with some of her Latino employees who were interested in working on their English. Leon offered the use of her bakery kitchen and invited the students to come one afternoon a week to help teach English. Students have developed what they call a language exchange, where individual students partner with an employee and meet once a week at the designated time to practice English and Spanish. With the help of a new community partner, Pastor Josh Colon, the language exchange has now expanded to two additional sites: Princeton Pike Church and a local nonprofit in Hamilton.

Continued on page 37

An Interview with Lourdes Leon

Brown: Please tell me how you got involved with Professor Shelly Bromberg and the Wilks Scholars project.

Leon: Well, I had several employees who wanted to learn or improve their English, so I asked Shelly if she had any students who might want to exchange English for Spanish lessons. She sent out a request to the Wilks students and then next thing you know, we had a whole group here. Then, in March 2007, another group of students from the Wilks project wanted to help us create a real positive community clean-up program, so I started working with that group as well.

Brown: In getting involved in a language exchange project, what did you expect your employees and the students to get out of it?

Leon: More than anything, to involve the English-speaking community with the Hispanic community to increase cross-cultural communication in this region where the number of Latinos is increasing. This way, everybody learns about other cultures and other languages and we accept each other more easily.

Brown: How do you think the language exchange program could be changed and improved to make it a better model for forming partnerships in your community?

Leon: I think we need to have a more formal registration process. If the students were to come on the weekends to just talk with employees, they could let them know what is going on, they could interact with them, get their phone numbers, and then tell them when the classes are. Then, they could register them and maybe offer a little dictionary or something that makes the process more legitimate. They could say, "here's a little dictionary for you, see you on Tuesday for the beginning of classes." If you register, you feel like it is something worthwhile and not just an informal meeting.

So, for instance, on a Saturday the students could set up a table here that had a sign and information about the Language Exchange—do it maybe every other week.

We need the students to interact more with the employees rather than just coming one day to do the

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exchange. This community responds better when they get to know you and feel comfortable.

We might also need to do this more often—maybe two days a week—so that the community partners feel more like it is a class.

Brown: Do you feel like an equal partner with the university? Do you think your employees are getting as much out of the project as they are putting in?

Leon: Yes. Because we respect each other, are open to criticism and trying new things, and really enjoy what we are doing together.

As for my employees, yes, this helps them to try to speak English, even if they are still struggling with pronunciation. A lot of times, they feel comfortable with students, and then when they go out to, for instance, buy a car or get something for the restaurant, they will come back and tell me, with pride, that they were able to do it in English. I think the exchange gives them confidence.

Brown: From your perspective as a Latina business owner and community member, what is the current status of Latino immigrants in Hamilton?

Leon: Very bad. Recently, the sheriff announced that he had 287(g) powers. The 287(g) is a subset of immigration enforcement that gives state or local law enforcement certain limited immigration power. In the case of the sheriff, his 287(g) will allow him to fill out immigration paperwork he previously could not. My sons said we should protest that and I asked them, “Why? They are not going to listen to us.” I am so tired of this uncertain future; we don’t know how bad it is going to get, even for businesses. Because Latinos are being targeted, they are moving out and not coming here, and we just don’t know what is going to happen. My business, because it is focused on the Latino community, cannot survive without community.

Brown: Could you tell me more about why this is happening? Why this sheriff?

Leon: The Latino population in this area is relatively new, growing in maybe the last ten years. So, a lot of people here have never seen a Latino. The sheriff is playing on their fears and ignorance to advance his career.

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Brown: And so...

Leon: Well, that's a whole book because he wants to "clean up" his county of Latinos. We keep asking about how you can identify someone who is undocumented. We know, from who is being picked up for even minor violations, that he is targeting Latinos, and in particular, people from Mexico and Central America, because his idea of Latino does not include Afro Latinos or those from a European background. He thinks all Latinos are drug dealers, child abusers, and criminals. Of course, there are bad people in every community, but there are many more good people. He even has on his web site, from when he went to the Mexico/Texas border, that everyone who crosses from Mexico is a criminal. He needs to learn that there are a lot of good people crossing for good reasons.

Brown: Could you tell me something about your growing up in Chicago and its impact on what you have pursued since then?

Leon: Triton College offered ESL in different parts of the community where they were located. They were in Melrose Park, a Western suburb of Chicago. They had a Lutheran school that was a regular school, but in the evenings they had an ESL program for the community. It was amazing to find a university so interested in the non-English speaking community that had developed those programs back in the early 1980s. Here, meanwhile, there are no such partnerships between the universities and Latino community, at least not to the extent that we had in Chicago. They had their own office right in the center of the Latino community where you could take a placement test and start studying English. It was interesting that the surrounding communities were not very happy about having the Latinos in that area at the time, but they still had the school and the English programs. But maybe, thanks to the college, we got a chance to establish ourselves and our community.

So I am hoping that we can do something like that here with Miami or some other university.

Brown: Thank you, Lourdes.

In rural Butler county, students are partnering with the Miami Oxford Organic Network (MOON) Co-op and the Miami Oxford Organic Network chapter of the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA) to help support and build a local-food economy in the region. They are interviewing farmers and local restaurants to create a local-food guide. They have organized a local-food dinner to raise awareness about local-food options, and they helped organize and administer the Fall Harvest MOON Festival.

In OTR, students are partnering with a range of organizations. One student is working with Over-the-Rhine Community Housing to set up Choices Café to provide a positive and safe environment for community members, tenants, and volunteers to meet and build community. Another student is partnering with the Over-the-Rhine Community Housing Network and the Peaslee Neighborhood Center to redesign the entryway and lobby of the Peaslee Center. A third student has partnered with the Cincinnati Civic Garden Center and is working on designing and building an irrigation system for the Eco-Garden on Main St. Two other students are working with the manager of Venice-on-Vine, Regina Saperstein, to design a tax incentive plan for local businesses that will encourage them to hire workers who have completed the Power Inspires Progress (PIP) training program at Venice-on-Vine.

With all of these projects, the community members have been the driving force. Community partners articulate the goals and students have worked with them to develop and implement projects that will forward those community goals.

Brown: Thus far in the “Acting Locally” project, what has surprised you that was not contemplated when the project was originally put together?

Shaffer: So many things. What has become so clear in doing this project is how much it challenges the traditional way things are set up within the university; not only the way knowledge is conceptualized, produced and disseminated, but also the way faculty think about teaching and the way students think about learning. If I had to choose the top two things, I would say, first, that I had no idea how transformational this kind of experience would be for students. In the past, I have seen students get inspired about ideas, but I don’t think I have ever seen this level

of empowerment. During the course of the project, which at this point is about three-quarters of the way through, I have watched strong students evolve into inspirational leaders, and I have seen timid students gain a level of self-confidence and commitment that is immeasurable.

Second, I would have to say that I have been surprised at how constraining the traditional structures of knowledge production at the university actually are. Community-based work is inherently messy and sometimes nonlinear and irrational. The three-credit-hour framework, separate disciplines, and traditional models of scholarship don't translate very easily into this real and messy world. Often times, it seemed easier to fall back into the predictability of one-hour class meetings and five-page papers and/or traditional academic research and article writing. Community-based projects take a lot of extra work on the part of faculty, students, and community partners. The only way this project has been possible is through the extreme generosity of the Provost's office at Miami University, in particular the support and vision of Vice Provost John Skillings, and the funding and support from the Harry T. Wilks Leadership Institute. It would be nice if the institution supported this kind of work more as the norm rather than the exception.

Brown: Thank you, Marguerite.

Shaffer: Thank you, David, for giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUPPORTING LOCAL HEALTH EFFORTS:

The Link between Rural Journalism and Public Health in One Rural Community

By Laura H. Downey, Carol L. Ireson, F. Douglas Scutchfield, and Al Cross

Collaboration among diverse disciplines at universities, and between academic institutions and local communities, is crucial for our civic life. Partnerships are especially needed to address our deepest community problems. Community health issues, in particular, provide unique opportunities for diverse partners to work collectively for the well-being of citizens. A partnership between journalism and public health might seem unlikely for addressing the health needs of rural communities. However, this article describes just such a rela-



tionship between the University of Kentucky's (UK) College of Public Health and UK's Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues (IRJCI) with the *Licking Valley Courier*, a locally owned and operated newspaper in Morgan County, Kentucky.

This article explains how one newspaper in a rural com-

munity served as a key vehicle for disseminating health information throughout a health-improvement process. A focus on the "local" makes a community newspaper an ideal partner for universities engaged in community projects, because it can serve as a trusted catalyst during the process of improving community health.

Specifically, the newspaper can be a channel for keeping the public informed about the health status of local residents, possible solutions for improving local health conditions, and insight into community

members' perception of problems. Faculty and students at academic institutions are logical collaborators with rural journalists, and such partnerships could even provide much needed help to cover stories of local interest.

Assessing the health of Morgan County, Kentucky

Morgan County is located near the northeastern end of the Cumberland Plateau, a region so heavily dissected by stream erosion that residents say they live in the Appalachian Mountains.

The Licking Valley Courier's motto is "Speaking Of and

For Morgan, the Bluegrass County of the

Mountains," because the county's topography is less hilly than those around it and it has fertile bottomland along the Licking River. The county is in the East Kentucky Coal Field, but coal is no longer an economic staple in the county; in recent years, the county's coal production has been small

or nonexistent.

The county is 95 percent white, with a population of 14,168. Twenty-two percent of the population is younger than 18 years of age, while 12 percent is 65 years or older. Many of the social and health indicators of Morgan County are, unfortunately, typical of this region of the country. Major health issues in Morgan County include poor oral health; high rates of breast cancer and obesity; elevated rates of diabetes and adults reporting a lack of physical activity; and a shortage of primary-care physicians, according to the Kentucky Institute of Medicine's *The Health of Kentucky: A County Assessment*, published in 2007. The institute ranked Morgan County 76th in overall health among the state's 120 counties.

Limited education, economic disadvantages, and high dependency on public assistance—as well as being medically underserved—are often linked to the poor health status of Morgan County residents. However, community assets such as strong family ties, commitment to the community, appreciation of natural beauty, and firm religious faith, make it a prime location for boosting citizen engagement to tackle the most pressing health issues.

From 2002 to 2006, the University of Kentucky conducted a multifaceted community health assessment in Morgan County, Kentucky. All of the community assessment activities were part of



an initiative to evaluate the health of local residents, while simultaneously discovering solutions to health concerns identified by community members. Throughout the assessment procedures, needs *and* assets were mapped, with the understanding that asset mapping empowers citizens to tap into the capacity that is already available in their community.

The assessment began by conducting a health survey during the summer and fall of 2003. Ten major health issues were uncovered through the survey, including heart disease, cancer, diabetes,



injury, depression, diet, exercise and maintaining a healthy weight, as well as tobacco use and access to health care. As a follow-up to the survey, three focus groups were held in the fall of 2003, and a booklet was distributed that outlined the ten leading health problems in Morgan County as identified by the survey results. The focus groups provided an opportunity for citizens to discuss *why* certain health problems were plaguing their community and to brainstorm about *how* these health problems could be solved.

In these focus groups, residents described their understanding of public health problems in the context of a complex web of socio-economic factors, community needs, and community assets. Although each focus group was located in a different area of the community, relatively all participants could personally relate to the leading health problems in Morgan County and explain individual, communal, and larger social issues at the heart of these problems. But more importantly, participants had insights and practical ideas about how the community health status could improve.

Participants had insights and practical ideas for how the community health status could improve.

During this project, the University of Kentucky College of Public Health and IRJCI, part of the School of Journalism and Telecommunications, formed a partnership. The IRJCI was a likely partner for this project. Its director, Al Cross, has a statewide reputation as a journalist, is a former weekly newspaper editor and manager, and has a mission of organizing community newspapers to cover local issues, including health care and health. This project opened the door for two departments on the University of Kentucky's campus—with seemingly different emphasis areas—to partner for

one goal: an academic-community partnership that supports an informed citizenry through rural media. Professor Cross' standing with community newspaper editors, and experience with local newspapers, facilitated the collaborative relationship between the College of Public Health and the *Licking Valley Courier*.

Local news media have conventionally been considered a key partner or potential partner in public-health efforts. However, the exact role of the media varies from market to market and is continually emerging. Media, as passive agents, have historically "dropped" messages about health to the public, and have not necessarily provided an active forum for public information on community processes. In contrast, this project utilized media as a channel for pulling a community together around a common problem.

Keeping the community informed

The *Licking Valley Courier*, with its emphasis on local stories, events and activities, seemed to be an appropriate and essential partner during the community assessment and solution-seeking activities. The editor-publisher, Earl Kinner Jr., agreed to participate in the assessment by providing a significant amount of newspaper space throughout the entire project. Due to limited staff at the newspaper, a reporter for the *Licking Valley Courier* could not cover the health assessment procedure or provide the articles, but faculty and a student on the project were invited to contribute articles to the newspaper for publication. Another media venue, a local radio station, also agreed to disseminate information about progress on the community health assessment, but not to the same extent as the newspaper. A 12-part series, entitled "Listening to Concerns and Discovering Solutions Together," appeared in the *Licking Valley Courier* to inform residents about the community assessment efforts, notify residents about assessment findings, recruit participants to discuss potential solutions for addressing community issues discovered in the assessment phase, and convey possible solutions to problems that were identified during the series of public forums.

Preliminary newspaper articles explained the findings from the community assessment and highlighted the leading health problems in the community. The first few articles discussed the severity of these problems and suggested possible methods of dealing with them. Once the community was informed about the leading health issues, the *Licking Valley Courier* announced upcoming forums in Morgan County, outlining the possible approaches

One participant stated, “In our ‘super-sized’ nation with super-sized portions of food, at some point everyone has to accept responsibility for their own actions.”

to the problem for discussion. The forums provided an opportunity for community members to talk through each approach for change, determine the barriers to following that approach, and generate ideas for making it applicable in their community. After each forum, the newspaper reported on the discussions that occurred, explained what key themes were emerging in the forums, and expressed the need for more community input.

Two examples

The tension between individual and community responsibility for health was evident during the series of forums. As one participant stated, “In our ‘super-sized’ nation, with super-sized portions of food, at some point everyone has to accept responsibility for their own actions. What people do, or do not do, directly affects their health.” In the forums, participants admitted that it often seemed like too much effort for families to

even use small opportunities for physical activity each day.

At one forum, a participant referred to the simple decisions that people make—such as where they choose to park in a Wal-

Mart parking lot—to highlight the relationship between individual choices, healthy behaviors, and trying to get things done quickly. This participant stated, “Just look at our health behaviors in the grocery store parking lot. We will ride around the parking lot seven times just to find the closest parking space.”



Other forum participants believed that community officials also had a crucial role in creating conditions that encourage individuals, particularly children, to be healthier. One man at a forum reminisced about community work he did as a college student in the 1960s. He shared, “I got paid to go pick up kids in the hollers and drive them to town for summer programs. Every day in the summer, I would pick up the kids who wanted to come to town for organized activities. They could spend all day with other kids having fun. I don’t know how much this program cost, but it seemed worth it to the kids. I imagine that there would be long-lasting impressions on the kids who participate.” He suggested that a parks and recreation department, funded by taxes as well as participation fees, could support programs like the one he remembered. Collective activities, such as the program this participant

described, are just one example of the ideas shared for encouraging local youth to get active.

This man's account was part of a story at the top of the front page of the September 1, 2005 edition of the *Licking Valley Courier*, headlined "Children, adolescent health at fore of community discussions." Such articles ensured that the discussions did not fall on deaf ears. As the discussions continued over the weeks and months that followed, participants began to work through the tension of individual responsibility and collective action.

In another issue of the *Licking Valley Courier*, one article presented threads of this forum discussion on the complex relationship between "life-on-the-go," the increasing problem of obesity, and small steps for improving healthy behaviors. The weekly newspaper was an essential vehicle to inform community members who could not participate in the community health forums.

Lessons learned

There is a tremendous opportunity for messages in local newspapers to reflect community conversations as they occur, partly because local papers enjoy a high level of trust among their readers. A 2005 study for the National Newspaper Association found that in markets with fewer than 100,000 residents, 67 percent of respondents said the accuracy of their community paper was good or excellent, and 50 percent said the paper was their primary source of local information. Television was far behind at 16 percent. The survey found that readers of community papers spend an average of 38 minutes with each issue, and about one-fourth said they keep the paper in the house for six days.

However, newspapers in small markets have meager resources, which limit their ability to cover local news stories and events, making it more difficult to create the kind of partnerships needed to assure coverage and cooperation during public-health initiatives. Although local news media might have an interest in covering a community improvement process, those in small markets are more than likely unable to dedicate substantial time and effort to these stories.

For example, *The Licking Valley Courier* only had three staff members and simply could not devote the time and energy needed to cover the health assessment improvement process. Faculty and one doctoral student from the University of Kentucky were able to assist the paper by drafting 12 articles for the newspaper series,

and their contributions were validated for the editor-publisher by the IRJCI director. The assets of academic institutions—faculty and students willing to serve as contributors with resources that make this service possible—can support local organizations whose resources may be limited. Academic institutions could draw on other campus resources, including graduate students enrolled in public health or journalism programs. Public health and journalism courses could use community assessment projects as an opportunity for students to gain experience working with community organizations, writing scientific findings in lay terms, and even training local residents on research procedures. Moreover, as the opportunities are pursued and others arise, service projects could be incorporated into appropriate courses, such as health communication.

Other weekly newspaper editors in Kentucky have acknowledged that a major issue for them is often not knowing where and how to find health data about their local areas. For example, if a local newspaper wanted to cover health-related topics, such as diabetes, teenage pregnancy, or the Oxycontin issue, they are not sure where to find the data that defines the issue locally. Even if the rural newspapers can locate the data needed, they might require additional assistance interpreting and translating the data into meaningful information for the readers. An academic partner could provide this assistance to local journalists if a partnership with the university has been established.

The local newspaper was a necessary link to keeping households in Morgan County informed on community conversations.

The relationship between academic institutions and local community institutions is symbiotic. The community possesses strengths that the university lacks, while many academicians' needs—in this project, that need was to communicate with the broader community—can be met through a partnership with a local and trusted institution. A university partnership, between the disciplines of journalism and public health, in and of itself, could not provide a platform for informing the community. The partnership had to extend off-campus. The local newspaper, as a trusted entity, was a necessary link to keeping households in Morgan County informed on community conversations and findings as they took place.

Conclusion

Rural, small-town, and/or community newspapers are important vehicles for informing the public about community assessment efforts and findings, recruiting participants for community discussions of

issues, and conveying the possible solutions that were identified during forums. But more importantly, local newspapers can provide a platform for larger community discussions to occur. Academic partners, particularly faculty and students, can be a resource for local newspapers when barriers that inhibit extensive coverage of local improvement processes are encountered. The professional skills and institutional assets of universities make them a suitable partner for supporting rural journalists' efforts to keep their communities informed about the issues that affect their daily lives, including lifestyle and health care choices that will help them live healthier, longer lives. As this article suggests, a partnership between an academic institution and a local newspaper can provide an opportunity for diverse disciplines to collaborate and support a firmly rooted community institution.

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DEMOCRATIC PARTNERSHIPS

An Interview with Ira Harkavy

*David Brown, coeditor of the Higher Education Exchange, spoke with Ira Harkavy, associate vice president and director of the Barbara and Edward Netter Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania and coauthor of *Dewey's Dream: Universities and Democracies in an Age of Education Reform*.*

Brown: Ira, could you start us off with a short introduction of your work?

Harkavy: We work to change higher education, in order to change the American schooling system so that it powerfully contributes to helping America (and other societies to some extent) become increasingly democratic.

More specifically, the Netter Center for Community Partnerships works to develop mutually beneficial, mutually respectful *democratic partnerships* between Penn and its local community. We work with schools, community-based organizations, communities of faith, and other institutions. We engage the entire range of Penn resources in our work, but our primary focus is to connect Penn's academic resources to the community. The Netter Center does this largely through academically based community service courses, which entail a problem-solving form of service learning. Penn students, faculty members, community residents, and even K-12 students, work together to help solve universal problems (such as poverty, inadequate health care and poor schooling) as they present themselves locally. We work with colleagues to develop this form of democratic problem-solving learning and research across the entire university, and to make it a major part of Penn's core academic experience. We optimistically envision our local work contributing to a national, indeed global, movement of universities and their community and school partners to help realize John Dewey's utopian dream of worldwide participatory democracy.

Brown: That accounts for the title of the recent book you co-authored, *Dewey's Dream*?

Harkavy: Dewey's work, as Robert Westbrook has written, can be understood as an effort to advance participatory democracy. Dewey's utopian vision was for the world to be composed of truly participatory, democratic, collaborative, interdependent societies. The book is designed to help realize that inspiring utopian vision—Dewey's dream—of a worldwide "Great Community." My co-authors, Lee Benson and John Puckett, and I believe that working to help make Dewey's dream a reality should be an extremely high priority for democratic-minded academics all over the world.

Brown: David Mathews, the Kettering Foundation's president, has argued, "Before we can have the schools we want, we must have the public we need." Ira, if you agree with David's argument,

how do you deal with such a precondition in your work?

Harkavy: I very much agree with David's argument.

We create the precondition through the development of university-assisted community schools, which constitute community- and democracy-building institutions that serve, engage, and educate the entire community, not just young people. The community school functions as the organizing hub that works with all community institutions and all neighborhood residents. It is the primary center for democratic deliberation, democratic action, and community building.

As we said, however, in *Dewey's Dream*, "No implication is intended that public schools are the only community places where learning takes place. Obviously, it also takes place in libraries, museums, private schools, and other institutions. Ideally, all the 'learning places' in a community would collaborate." In short, we create the precondition by having the neighborhood public school function as much more than a traditional school. It is a center for helping to create the democratic public needed for democratic schooling and democratic citizenship. Creating and sustaining a university-assisted community school is, in effect, a process that simultaneously involves creating and sustaining a democratic school, a democratic community, and ultimately, a democratic society.

Brown: A few years back, at a conference at the New School, I met Hillary Aisenstein, who was then director of the Philadelphia



Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development. How does the work of that organization relate to yours?

Harkavy: In 1987, with colleagues from Temple and Swarthmore, we formed PHENND as a higher educational coalition to encourage collaboration and to help engage each higher educational institution in the Philadelphia area in democratic partnerships with its local community. The idea is that, to genuinely improve the quality of life in Philadelphia, each college and university would need to work locally with its neighbors. This strategy of higher education contributing to creating democratic neighborly communities is central to our work and approach, as is the focus on helping to create these communities in a higher ed's local geographic community. I have served as a co-chair of PHENND since its founding, and the PHENND offices are housed at our Netter Center for Community Partnerships. It is very much a coalition, with some 42 higher eds participating.

Brown: In *Dewey's Dream*, you argue that, "University-assisted community schools, in our judgment, constitute the best *practical* means to help realize Dewey's general theory of participatory democracy." Why "university-assisted" as the "best practical means" when, at the same time, you characterize universities, your own included, as still having a "hierarchical culture and structure" that must "radically" change?

No doubt universities must change if society is to become increasingly democratic.

Harkavy: No doubt, universities must change if society is to become increasingly democratic. Creating and sustaining university-assisted community schools is as much a strategy for university change as it is a strategy for community and school change. In this sense, creating and sustaining university-assisted community schools is also the best practical means for changing and democratizing universities. Universities also have the resources necessary for community schools to function effectively, and university resources can be effectively, and often optimally, utilized by helping to create and sustain community schools. Therefore, it is in a university's interest to help develop university-assisted community schools. It is not easy to do so. It takes time, hard work and persistence. But it makes sense, is doable, has been done, and has the potential to help make needed democratic change in higher education, schools, and communities, as well as the requisite partnerships, for realizing Dewey's general theory of participatory democracy.

Brown: You argue that "actively helping to develop an effective, integrated, genuinely democratic, pre-K through higher education

schooling system ... should become a collaborative primary mission of American universities and colleges.” For you, what makes such a desired system “genuinely democratic?” What is the evidence that is happening on the Penn campus and in West Philadelphia?

Harkavy: A genuinely democratic system is one in which students are appropriately and significantly involved in determining the purposes of what they learn, as well as what they actually learn. Students collaborate actively with their teachers and with each other in constructing and implementing the curriculum. They learn through collaboratively solving real problems (often problems in their communities and schools), and are therefore making genuine contributions to others and to knowledge, and learn the skills of cooperation and deliberation. They learn through active engagement and reflection, and share their reflections with other students. Students also play a significant and appropriate role in school governance. Students from pre-K through higher education work and learn together. Peer-assisted learning characterizes much of the instruction. And students at all levels share a common curriculum that focuses on a series of significant real world community problems.

In both Penn and local public schools, we have a very, very long way to realize the ideal of genuinely democratic education I’ve just sketched. Nonetheless, at Penn there are an increasing number of faculty teaching academically based community service (ABCS) courses—new curricula units such as an ABCS-based jazz minor and urban education minor. There are an increasing number of students enrolled in ABCS courses, and increased student involvement in shaping Penn’s undergraduate arts and sciences curriculum. There are more courses that employ peer-assisted learning, collaborative learning, and problem-solving learning, and increased student involvement in extracurricular programs that involve collaboration and learning with public school students, their parents, and other community members. The development of components of curricula that focus on common problems in West Philadelphia would be evidence that this is happening in West Philadelphia and the Penn campus. Common and collaborative work on nutrition, health, environment, arts and culture, and science and math are evidence that the *very early* signs of a collaborative, democratic pre-K through higher education schooling system are developing.

Brown: You conclude your book by saying that your “primary purpose is agenda-setting, movement initiating, not particular thesis-proving.” But isn’t “thesis-proving” a deeply ingrained academic habit? How do you deal with that at Penn with participating faculty?

Harkavy: It certainly is an ingrained habit, and I am not sure how many of the colleagues actively working with us in West Philadelphia would write a book in a similar fashion. Faculty tend to continue to work with us because they have experienced the benefits to the community and Penn. They have seen benefits to their research and teaching, to student learning and civic development, and to the quality of life and learning in West Philadelphia.

Brown: Ira, what else is the Netter Center doing to reduce the “distance” between Penn administrators and faculty members with West Philadelphia residents?

Harkavy: The distancing issue is one that the Netter Center attempts to reduce, if not overcome, on a daily basis. To a significant extent, the center’s work involves helping the Penn faculty and administration to increasingly focus their academic work and the work of Penn in general on helping to improve/revitalize the West Philadelphia community. As I said before, the history and tradition of academia and of urban research universities naturally lead faculty and universities in quite the opposite direction. The dominant tendency is to conceptualize communities such as West Philadelphia as a problem, rather than an opportunity for learning, civic development, research and institutional improvement. Seeing Penn’s future as intertwined with its neighbors’, and taking the actions necessary to create and sustain democratic, mutually beneficial partnerships that decrease the distance between Penn and West Philadelphia, are ongoing processes that are at odds with the still dominant disciplinary and commercial orientation of higher education, particularly research universities such as Penn. So as much as Penn and Penn students and faculty have worked with the West Philadelphia community in recent years, one of the center’s roles is to encourage that positive development to continue, accelerate, and expand, affecting the university in deeper, more extensive, and more profound ways.

Brown: You obviously feel strongly that “real world problem solving” is the best strategy to advance knowledge and learning. Why is it, then, that so many academics, who obviously want to “advance knowledge,” steer clear of “real world problem solving?”

The dominant tendency is to conceptualize communities such as West Philadelphia as a problem.

The organization of the university itself works against real world problem-solving.

Harkavy: Tradition and history—the belief that this (the current discipline, as opposed to a real-world focus of academic work) is how it is, always has been, and will be done in the future. Working on disciplinary problems, moreover, is what colleagues have been trained to do; or, as Benjamin Franklin put it, we are all affected by “ancient customs and habitudes.” Powerful incentives exist (career advancement, financial support among them) to focus on internal disciplinary issues and concerns and to avoid real-world problems. The organization of the university itself works against real world problem-solving. As an aphorism neatly put it: “Communities have problems, universities have departments.” Finally, in part, it is because we lack sufficient examples of powerful, democratic, real world problem-solving research that contribute to democratic, real world problem-solving knowledge, democracy, and improving the quality of life.

Brown: You have argued that the “neighborhood school can effectively serve as the core neighborhood institution” with the potential of integrating other community institutions and groups. Isn’t the “neighborhood” school becoming only one of many educational options and losing what centrality it once had?

Harkavy: Certainly, the neighborhood public school is only one of the institutions that educate students and adults; and it has, in many ways lost the centrality it once had. But it remains the one public institution available to the entire community in nearly every community across the US. In poor communities, it is often the only institution, other than communities of faith (which at best tend to serve a segment of the residents of a neighborhood) that has a positive social function. Moreover, schooling and education have never been more central to both individual and societal success—and public schools educate the vast, vast majority of our young people.

Brown: Given the decentralized world that is emerging with a global economy and global communication, is it really possible to still construct “democratic, cosmopolitan, neighborly communities,” as you have put it?

Harkavy: The global economy and global communication make constructing democratic, cosmopolitan, neighborly communities more important than ever. The need to connect to others, to be part of a face-to-face community is, as it has always been, crucial to democratic life. The forces of globalization certainly erode local communities, as well as parochialism. Schools, because of their educational and democratic functions, are uniquely positioned

to be centers of *cosmopolitan* communities. Need and function do not mean that schools will necessarily fill this role. For that to happen, it will require hard work and significant change across higher education and schooling in general, as well as in government and other institutions. The process is one of pragmatic, evolutionary democratic change that takes significant time, serious effort, and a movement of academics and community members committed to producing that change.

Brown: Of the approximately 150 Penn courses “on the books” that work with the community, could you describe some of those that are offered regularly and have substantial enrollments?

Harkavy: There is, for example *Learning Biology by Teaching*, where Penn students teach a series of hands-on activities to students in biology classes at West Philadelphia High School that teach the high school students fundamental aspects of genetics, evolution, anatomy, physiology and other topics in the high school biology curriculum. Then, there is *Urban Environments: Prevention of Childhood Lead Poisoning*, where Penn students collaborate with middle school teachers in West Philadelphia to engage eighth graders in exercises that apply environmental research about lead poisoning to their homes and neighborhoods. *African American & Latino English* is an introduction to the use and structure of dialects of English used by the African American and Latino communities in the United States. The fieldwork component involves the study of the language and culture of everyday life and the application of this knowledge to programs for raising the reading levels of elementary school children. In this course, students tutor children at Drew Elementary School as part of an Urban Minorities Reading Project.

Finally, among many others, there is *The Big Picture: Mural Art in Philadelphia*, a course

where students learn to see mural art as a tool for social change. This course combines theory with practice. Students design and paint a large outdoor mural in West Philadelphia in collaboration with Philadelphia high school students and community groups.

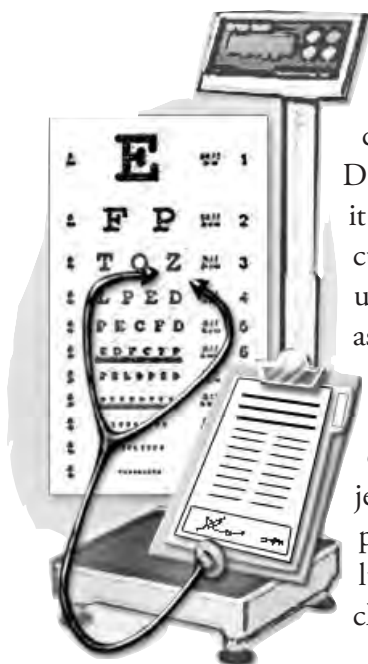


Brown: We obviously can't discuss all the ongoing Netter Center School and Community initiatives. Could you pick out one that you consider, for whatever reason, to be of singular importance to our readers?

Harkavy: The Sayre High School-Penn University-Assisted Community School Initiative. In 1996, the principal of Sayre School first approached Penn's Netter Center with the idea that having a health center on site would be a boon to the students and the community. How to galvanize the necessary resources was a major hurdle. Then, in the spring and summer of 2002, a group of Penn undergraduates in an academically based community service (ABCS) seminar focused their efforts on helping to solve the healthcare crisis in West Philadelphia. The students' research and work with the community led them to propose the establishment of a community health promotion and disease prevention program at a public school in West Philadelphia, the Sayre Middle School. Their research proved to be so compelling that it led to the development of a school-based Community Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Program at Sayre Middle School. In 2006-2007, Sayre completed a three-year transition and became a high school.

The school-based Community Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Program at the Sayre School was formally launched in January of 2003. It functions as the central component of a university-assisted community school designed to advance student

learning and democratic development, as well as to help strengthen families and institutions within the community. The multidisciplinary character of the Sayre Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Program (SHPDPP) enables it to be integrated into the curriculum and co-curriculum of both the public school and the university, assuring an educational focus as well as sustainability of the program. To support this aim, Penn faculty and students from across the University now work at Sayre through new and existing courses, internships, and research projects. As an outcome of the integration of health promotion and service activities in the curriculum, Sayre students serve as *agents* of healthcare change in the Sayre neighborhood.



Higher education can become a permanent anchor for revitalizing schools and communities.

A considerable number and variety of Penn academically based community service courses provide the resources and support that make it possible to operate, sustain, and develop the SHPDPP. Literally hundreds of Penn students (professional, graduate and undergraduate) and some twenty faculty members, from a wide range of Penn schools and departments, work at Sayre. Since they are performing community service while engaged in academic research, teaching and learning, they are simultaneously practicing their specialized skills and developing, to some extent at least, their moral and civic consciousness and democratic character. And since they are engaged in a highly integrated common project, they are also learning how to communicate, interact, and collaborate with each other in unprecedented ways, which have broadened their academic horizons.

Dr. Bennett L. Johnson, a Professor of Dermatology and the Senior Medical Officer of the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, has played the key role in engaging the Medical School with the Sayre project, recruiting students, residents, house staff, and faculty to contribute to various health education and health promotion activities. For example, Sayre eleventh graders working with Penn students in an Intake Medical Procedures course are learning how to perform the basics of intake medical procedures (blood pressure, height and weight, glucose, reflex, vision, etc.). Sayre students also learn about prominent community health concerns (hypertension, obesity, diabetes, etc.) and will gain clinical experience by operating an after school health monitoring clinic.

The Sayre-Penn model extends student learning and positive youth development into out-of-school time as well—the time when crimes by youth are most often committed. Most recently, as issues of youth violence have flared in Philadelphia, the Sayre-Penn university-assisted community school has begun to address these issues more directly—to map local “safe havens” and to organize parents, community leaders and local groups to assist in efforts to address neighborhood violence.

Sayre represents a unique and highly effective integration of city, community, and university resources that aims to enhance the educational, recreational, and health-related opportunities, and improve the overall quality of life of the students at Sayre High School, its feeder schools, and the surrounding community. The work at Sayre demonstrates that higher education can become a permanent anchor for revitalizing schools and communities, and advancing

student learning and development, if the vast resources it possesses, particularly its faculty, students, and staff, are brought to bear in a coordinated fashion.

Brown: The number of faculty, students and courses engaged with the real-world problems of West Philadelphia is quite impressive. Do you think Penn has reached “critical mass” and, if so, what have been the primary incentives at work? If you don’t think critical mass has been reached, what remains to be done to achieve it?

Harkavy: I think we are *reaching* a critical mass. The incentives have been the outstanding work and enthusiasm of the students engaged in the work, the positive experiences of faculty colleagues who serve as examples to others, the support and engagement of leading faculty with significant academic reputations, the support of deans, and the strong support and leadership of Penn’s president, Amy Gutmann. I think working with colleagues on exciting and important problems, working with students and community members, and seeing the work make a genuine difference are all powerful incentives. For some colleagues, work with the West Philadelphia community enables them to better realize the civic and societal goals (that is, to improve the world, help improve the conditions in poor communities, advance democracy) that motivated them to become academics in the first place.

Brown: It seems that the Netter Center is both learning-oriented and service-oriented. Do you think that has been the actual experience of the Penn faculty and students who are involved or does one orientation more or less prevail?

Harkavy: It is difficult to say for sure what the experience of Penn faculty and students have been in this regard. But, I can say that the center works to create, develop, and help implement an approach in which service and learning are genuinely integrated. Moreover, our work is very much inspired by Penn’s founder, Benjamin Franklin. He wrote that the purpose of a Penn education was to develop “an inclination joined with an ability to serve.” Indeed, service, according to Franklin, was “the great aim and end of all learning.” I very much agree that the purpose of learning and knowledge should be to help contribute to changing the world for the better.

Brown: I have said on other occasions that professional reputation is, and will remain, the reference point for those in the academy. Do you think that organizations like the Netter Center

The purpose of learning and knowledge should be to help contribute to changing the world for the better.

have to provide “professional” reasons for faculty to be attentive to civic culture?

Harkavy: I certainly believe that faculty members in general will do this work if it is a means to do good *and* do well. Among other things, the Center has to help illustrate that engaged, democratic, locally focused teaching and research can produce first-rate academic work. We do this by being attentive to the need for faculty to present and publish their work and encouraging colleagues to do so. We also assist faculty in acquiring grants that both support their research and teaching and help to advance their careers. The Netter Center also provides opportunities for Penn faculty members to network with colleagues from across the US and around the world who are doing similar academic work with schools and communities. In this way, we contribute to the development of professional networks committed to promoting engaged scholarship.

Brown: How important has the “top-down” support of administrators been as the Netter Center has evolved?

Harkavy: We have been most fortunate to have had strong support from Penn’s leadership since the 1980s on. Sheldon Hackney created and championed the center, and Judith Rodin helped advance our work considerably. Amy Gutmann, Penn’s current president, has made the Netter Center an important component for realizing the Penn Compact; a comprehensive strategy to increase the university’s impact locally, nationally, and globally. Penn’s presidents have indeed provided crucial leadership, as have other senior administrators (provosts and deans) who have recognized the academic and civic benefits of our work.

Brown: Some would say that what really counts in the professional culture of the academy is not what one produces, but *how* you produce it. Has this brought the Netter Center into conflict when such a measure is used?

Harkavy: I think they both count. But I do think that we have to make the case that an engaged, democratic approach to learning and knowledge creation is powerful and productive. We can make that case through the convincing nature of the work itself, by discussing the intellectual and societal contributions made through engaged scholarship by Francis Bacon, Franklin, Jane Addams, Dewey, Du Bois, and others, and by conducting serious explorations as to which approaches to scholarship tend to be most useful for advancing knowledge and democratic life. As

Donald Stokes emphasized in *Pasteur's Quadrant*, the current belief in the superiority of so-called basic research is based largely on ideology, not scientific examination and evidence. Through its work, the Netter Center, as well as similar organizations in other universities, should work to illustrate the real world and intellectual benefits of “democratic scholarship for a democratic society.”

Brown: Thank you, Ira.

DEMOCRACY'S GOOD NAME: The Rise and Risks of the World's Most Popular Form of Government

By Michael Mandelbaum
Edith Manosevitch, Reviewer

In the last four decades the world has witnessed one of the most remarkable political changes in history—the dramatic surge of democracy. From a mere ten democracies in 1900 and only thirty in 1975, democracies in the international landscape today have increased to 119 of the world's 190 countries. Democracy has become by far the most popular and celebrated form of government.

However, democracy did not always have a good reputation. Modern history provides the horrendous example of Nazi Germany, where a democratic electoral process led to the oppression and murder of millions. American efforts to implant democracy in some parts of the world have failed, most recently in Iraq, where the presence of US troops led to a dismayingly high level of violence. Why did democracy have such bad consequences in the past, and what brought about the successful spread of democracy in recent decades? Why is it that major world powers remain undemocratic, and efforts to export democracy often fail and make conditions even worse?

Democracy's Good Name provides a critical historical analysis of the evolution of democracy as a form of government. Mandelbaum discusses the conditions that enabled the rise of democracy and the barriers to its worldwide adoption. He examines the relationship between democracy and peace, in particular the role of democracy in mitigating terrorism. The book concludes with an optimistic prediction about the future of existing democracies, and a careful assessment of the prospects that China, Russia, and the Arab world will convert to democracy.

The nature of modern democracy, Mandelbaum explains, is a fusion of two political traditions—*liberty* and *popular sovereignty*. The risks and dangers of democracy arise when popular sovereignty

appears in the absence of liberty, thereby enabling the tyranny of the majority. During the French Revolution, the rule of the people of France resulted in the abuse and destruction of property of the wealthy few. During the 20th century, the tyranny of the majority took the form of oppression and murder of minority ethnic and religious groups. This pattern, again, was manifested during the 1990s in the Balkans, and is currently occurring in Iraq.

Democracy, like a popular brand name, spreads by example. When proven successful and meeting consumers' needs, it becomes attractive to others, thus enhancing its reputation and popularity. The initial spread of democracy, Mandelbaum argues, resulted in large part because of the appealing economic conditions of the democratic nations of Great Britain and the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries. The forces that brought about this success involve both internal and external factors.

Mandelbaum begins with an historical account of the forces from without that brought about the rise of democracy. Most notable are the Industrial Revolution and the two world wars. The former made Great Britain wealthier and more powerful than any other nation in the 18th and 19th centuries, thus enabling the rise of the British Empire. World Wars I and II in the 20th century have demonstrated that democracies can prevail even under such extreme circumstances. The book also points to the role of individual leaders in securing the rise of democracy. Washington, Churchill, Gorbachev, and Nehru, to name a few, each in his time and historical context, helped secure democracy's rise with deep commitment, political wisdom, and skills.

Turning to the internal factors that enabled the successful spread of democracy, Mandelbaum points to the empirical evidence that democracy has always been accompanied by some version of market economy. He recognizes the potential problems of market economy—the creation of extreme inequalities, the disruption of lives of families and communities due to market-driven dislocation—and the accusations that it promotes selfishness and materialism. Nonetheless, Mandelbaum makes a compelling argument about the power of free-market economy in establishing the institutions that enable democracy to function and instilling the values that are necessary for it to endure.

First, the effective working of free markets produces wealth, and wealth stimulates the demand for democracy by making it an attractive model for others. Market-created wealth also increases

the capacity for democratic governance because its key features are private property and the rule of the law—both crucial elements of liberty. Market economies also bring the wealth that enables the creation and sustainability of *civil society*—the wide array of associations, organizations, and groups that operate independently from government. In turn, civil society helps to further protect both popular sovereignty and liberty. It protects popular sovereignty by creating mechanisms by which citizens can exert their influence and voice to control those in power and affect policy-making; and it helps protect liberty by providing arenas in which citizens can pursue their interests independent of government control. Mandelbaum does not elaborate on the role of civil society in promoting democracy. But he does stress the importance of civil society in contemporary democracies. Unlike ancient Greece and Colonial New England towns that managed to govern themselves without the wide array of civic associations, modern democracies have much more powerful and intrusive governments, along with far larger populations. Both features combined make it impossible to ensure genuine liberty and true representative government without an intricate and vibrant civil society that serves as both a link and a buffer between citizens and their elected officials.

Most fundamental, perhaps, is the argument that market-driven economic systems serve as “schools for democracy” by embedding the values, habits, and attitudes—in particular, compromise and trust—that underlie a well-functioning democracy. Compromise is the essence of effective politics, as differences in opinion and interests are the nature of society. Trust in government—as well as government’s good-faith effort to serve the public’s political and economic interests—is also essential for public officials to operate peacefully and effectively. In a similar way, compromise is a central feature of market economies due to the defining conflict between the sellers’ desires for profit and the buyers’ limited resources; and trust is becoming increasingly important as markets transcend local borders, and consumers and sellers must trust that merchandise and payment will reach their destinations.

Mandelbaum walks us through American history, demonstrating that promoting democracy has been a long-standing and deeply felt commitment among our leadership. The September 11 attacks have revived this commitment, with the Bush administration placing the spread of democracy at the top of the national agenda. Yet, despite the deep commitment and enormous efforts

put into spreading democracy, specifically during the past decade in Iraq, American efforts have not been successful. Why? Objective obstacles, such as local resistance, provide some explanation, but Mandelbaum argues that the greatest and most significant obstacle is the inherent difficulty of the task. Popular sovereignty, he says, is fairly simple to establish within a relatively short time frame. But genuine liberty comes about through a process of instilling the skills, habits, and values that the practice of liberty requires. All take time to develop, and must develop domestically; they cannot be imposed or imported ready-made.

What, then, is the role of local government and foreign democracies? Governments can contribute to democracy successfully taking root by providing security and law—the necessary framework for enabling a market economy. Foreign nations can also help by serving as examples worth emulating, helping abolish tyrannical leadership, and providing financial support. International trends are also helping to further promote democracy by providing incentives for nondemocracies. The European Union provided economic incentives for nondemocratic nations in Europe to adopt democratic governance. The World Trade Organization has provided economic incentives to conduct a free-market economy, which in turn helps facilitate the conditions for democracy. All this may support efforts to implant democracy, but cannot replace the domestic process of instilling the values, skills, and habits necessary for democracy.

Looking at the prospects for democracy, Mandelbaum is optimistic about existing democracies and the general global trend. He discusses the democratic peace theory—according to which, the unique features of democratically run nations dispose them to deal with other countries in a peaceful fashion. Historical and contemporary international relations attest that democratically governed countries seldom, if ever, engage in armed conflict. This global trend toward democracy has made the world more peaceful, he argues, but it does not guarantee the end of war or terrorism.

Turning to Russia, Mandelbaum explains how the communist heritage—norms, values, and social structure—has been a major barrier to the development of a genuine democracy. He examines the effects of large-scale energy wealth which encourages anti-democratic political and economic patterns. In China, key barriers include the strong resistance to democracy by the Communist party and the absence of formal structures of democracy, such as genuine

political parties and meaningful elections. But both countries, he argues, harbor the social and economic trends favorable for democracy, and have exposure to successful democracies among their neighbors. Mandelbaum therefore expects communism to fade in China over time, in favor of democracy. Similarly, he portrays a likely scenario of democracy gradually taking over in Russia.

The poorest prospects for democracy, according to Mandelbaum, are in the Arab world, due to a combination of powerful antidemocratic forces working in these countries. Mandelbaum describes how the ethnic and religious heterogeneity within the Arab nations often results in the dominance of one group, which in turn tends to resist democracy for fear of losing its privileged status. Further, the abundance of oil creates powerful incentives to retain power and resist democracy, since wealth and political power often go together in these nations. Finally, the dominant faith within Arab nations, Islam, also stands as a barrier to the development of democratic patterns due to the fusion of faith and power, which creates a bias against liberty and popular sovereignty, thus contradicting the foundation of democratic governance.

Nonetheless, Mandelbaum points out that the forces of the international surge of democracy have put the question of democracy on the political agenda of every undemocratic country. This will remain, he argues, as long as the richest and most powerful sovereign countries govern themselves in a democratic fashion. Therefore, the prospects for global democracy depend heavily on the durability of existing democracies. As the globalization trend continues, and with it the incentives for countries to adopt democratic governance, Mandelbaum leaves us with the notion that only a massive-scale disaster would undermine values and norms exercised by hundreds of millions of people in democracies around the world.

AFTERWORD

By David Mathews

I was preparing for a speaking engagement at Kansas State University when the articles arrived for this issue of the *Higher Education Exchange* (HEX). That proved to be a most fortuitous coincidence because the campus was an ideal location for raising one of the questions I wanted to explore in HEX. Are we creating a democracy without citizens, that is, a democracy in which citizens rule in name only and do very little other than choose representatives to govern them? The possibility of having a citizenless democracy adds to the significance of an issue that the *Exchange* has been raising since its inception: what are institutions of higher education doing about “the public and its problems,” to borrow John Dewey’s phrase? For citizens to be pushed to the margins of our political system would surely be one of those problems.

Recently, colleges and universities have responded with a multitude of civic initiatives, enough to suggest that some kind of movement may be occurring. And Kansas State, which has the distinction of being one of the first colleges founded as a land-grant institution, has been on the *Exchange*’s radar for some time as a university with a broad-based commitment to the public. Citizens are at the top of the agenda of my host, the university’s Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy (ICDD), which has drawn in faculty from across the institution. ICDD encourages public deliberation, which is sometimes called “choice work” because it is real work that citizens do with citizens.

The timing of the visit also turned out to be fortuitous because when I was in Kansas, the presidential campaign was in full swing and students were very much aware of the role citizens play as voters. My question was, is voting all citizens do, and, if it is, is voting alone enough to sustain our democracy?

As readers of the *Exchange* know, questions of whether there is a civic engagement movement on campuses—and the kind of democracy such a movement might foster—have been explored in several issues. And the articles in this issue continue to address these questions. Based on what I have read and seen, I sometimes

wonder if there aren't two movements with quite different implications for democracy because of different views about citizens. Or, if there aren't two movements, perhaps some evolution in civic initiatives is underway. One thing is clear: the initiatives coming out of colleges and universities are based on different concepts of who citizens are and what they should do.

In the Kansas lecture, I reviewed the substantial evidence that the citizenry, regardless of what it is supposed to do, is actually doing less and less, to the point that citizens are now being pushed to the sidelines of politics, a trend that has been cited in previous issues of *HEX*. I continued to rely on Matthew A. Crenson and Benjamin Ginsberg, who have documented this sidelining in their book *Downsizing Democracy*. They attribute the declining influence of a collective citizenry to a growing "personal democracy," in which citizens are equated with customers or individual recipients of various government services rather than people joined with others to combat common problems.

American citizens don't need research to tell them they have been sidelined; for years they have complained of not being able to make a significant difference in the political system. At the same time, people say they *should* make a difference and that they want fundamental change in the political system. Recently, that demand has gotten more attention from the political establishment and is being discussed in the presidential campaign.

In an election year, the role of citizens is dramatized by the importance of the ballot box, and we may see a welcomed upswing in participation in November's election. Elections, however, are not tracked just by who wins the popular vote or has the most delegates at conventions. Who can raise the most money is also a measure of electability. Money votes, and after an election is over, Americans suspect that dollars count more than their ballots when they see well-funded special interests fuel hyperpartisan combat from statehouses to Washington.

Doubts about the political system's responsiveness, however, haven't stopped people from looking for local opportunities to make the difference they want to make. In the last ten years, we have seen a renewed emphasis on making communities work better. People say they want more control over the future of their communities, which requires collective problem solving and what has been called "public work" (work done *by* citizens not *for* them). This desire to shape the future was quite evident in scores of communities across

the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina struck. Citizens were afraid that developers would come in, buy up land, and remake their communities without people having any say in what happened.

Despite Americans' desire to be able to make a difference, modern conditions could make sidelining citizens irreversible. In 1998, the *Economist* carried what amounted to an obituary for citizenship when one of its articles contended that the average person is destined to be a relatively impotent amateur in a world where professionals necessarily rule. This point of view isn't confined to the *Economist*. At Kansas State, I recalled a discussion of the role of citizens in the aftermath of Katrina in which I was told that rebuilding New Orleans was a job for professionals in the Corps of Engineers because everything depended on restoring the levees, which isn't something citizens can do.

If citizens are increasingly irrelevant except as voters, what is to prevent them from becoming the political "phantoms" that Walter Lippmann insisted they are? The claim that a sovereign public can rule itself, he argued, has never been anything more than political fiction. *The Irony of Democracy*, a political science textbook, agrees, concluding that "If the survival of the American system depended on the existence of an active, informed, and enlightened citizenry, then democracy in America would have disappeared long ago; for the masses of America are apathetic and ill-informed about politics and public policy, and they have a surprisingly weak commitment to democratic values.... fortunately for these values and for American democracy, the American masses do not lead; they follow." This point of view will prevail as long as there aren't concrete answers to the question of what citizens can do other than go to the polls.

For some time, *HEX* has been exploring the ways that colleges and universities answer the question of what citizens do in a modern democracy. All institutions insist they play an important role in our political system, yet the word "democracy" has so many different meanings that it is difficult to know how academic institutions understand the role of citizens. For instance, some academic leaders are silent on the question. They claim that their institutions serve democracy just by existing. That ends any discussion. So in Kansas, as in previous issues of the *Exchange*, I tried to narrow the question to what seems to be the heart of the matter: are institutions of higher learning doing anything to increase the capacity of citizens to shape their future?

In this *Exchange*, Sean Creighton's article on civic engagement suggests the answer to that question is much less satisfactory than might be expected in light of all the rhetoric about engaged universities. He found few of the numerous university-community initiatives "focused on building relationships with community partners much less on ... the civic capacity of those community organizations and the individuals they served." There are exceptions, of course, and the University of Pennsylvania partnership may be one. The interview with Ira Harkavy describes the objective of Penn's efforts as building "democratic neighborly communities" through university-assisted schools.

The Kettering Foundation has found that in some of these partnerships, colleges and universities try to listen carefully and communicate clearly with a diverse constituency in an effort to better serve communities. But communicating with and serving communities isn't the same as building civic capacity—the capacity of a citizenry to join forces and act on its behalf. Since capacity building isn't usually an objective, the partnerships could be fostering clientalism rather than self-rule. One study is not enough to generalize about all types of partnerships, so the Creighton article is more of a caution light than a stop sign. The impulse of colleges and universities to reach outside their walls is certainly a positive development. And as Lourdes Leon's interview demonstrates, too much benefit has come from the service provided by these institutions to take their contribution lightly.

Instead of debating the merits of service, the foundation has been looking at engagement initiatives that go beyond providing services or offering technical assistance. These are initiatives that not only reach outside campus confines but also reorient the academic enterprise in the public world. One of the distinctive characteristics of such initiatives is that they treat citizens as people who combine their skills and resources to do or produce something—organizing an economic revitalization project, building a youth development center, starting a neighborhood watch, or launching a national campaign to stop drunk drivers. The objective of the outreach initiatives is to help build the capacity to do this work.

It is worth noting that these initiatives aren't found in just one kind of college or university or in one region of the country. The institute at Kansas State has counterparts in institutions from Gulf Coast Community College in Florida to the West Virginia Center for Civic Life, affiliated with the University of Charleston,

to the Center for Civic Engagement at Hofstra University in New York. At latest count, there are more than 40 of these institutes in the United States. A new one to assist in Latin America is being organized in Colombia at the Technological University of Bolivar in Cartagena (which is technical in the sense that MIT is).

It is also worth noting and perhaps surprising that these initiatives are usually faculty led. I say surprising because faculty members are said to be focused on research within their disciplines and to look askance at colleagues who are interested in public matters. That still seems to be the case, but perhaps not as much as it has been in the past.

The depth and intensity of faculty members' search for what philosophers call "public happiness" is captured in this issue of *HEX* through the interview with Marguerite Shaffer. She speaks as a mother of two children, as well as a citizen—roles she integrates with that of a scholar. At Kansas State, I reported on what she said to David Brown. It is so powerful that it is worth repeating here:

I have joked with colleagues that I am in the midst of an academic midlife crisis—questioning every aspect of life in academe. In thinking about my future in the university, I have wondered whether my time will be well spent researching and writing a scholarly monograph that might well get me promoted, but that will be read by only a handful of like-minded scholars with similar intellectual interests. I have questioned the time I devote to teaching critical thinking skills to students who are socialized, both inside and outside the university, to care more about their final grades and potential career options than the knowledge they can share and the collective future they will create.

Shaffer is bringing her democratic sensibilities to bear on what is happening inside her university. Her partnership is external; it is with the larger political culture. Yet, she brings to it what she does every day as a professor. She is repositioning higher education in democracy by starting from *within* academe. Her kind of engagement isn't an add-on or a special project, detached from her institution's main work; it is integral to what the university does.

Shaffer knows that academic culture is also a political culture with implications for what citizens do. And she is uncomfortable with what her students are learning. She is afraid that they graduate having little sense of what it means to be a citizen—with scant awareness of themselves as political actors who are able, and obligated, to shape their collective future—and perhaps not even recognizing that their personal future is collective. What this

scholar in American studies sees on “bad days” is a democracy without citizens.

Shaffer’s views are more than the concerns of one lone faculty member. What she said in the interview resonates with what many of the *Exchange*’s authors have written and faculty members have reported in other Kettering Foundation Press publications. I am reminded of *Speaking of Politics*, a book by two Wake Forest University professors, Katy Harriger and Jill McMillan. They report on creating a Democracy Fellows program and describe its effects on students. In this four-year experiment, students came to see citizenship as joining forces with other people to solve common problems and not merely as claiming personal rights. These results came from classroom instruction combined with practical experience in making collective decisions that could lead to action on campus or in the local community.

Other faculty members who have “gone public” have involved students in doing public work. (The choice work I mentioned earlier is one example.) In their book *Voices of Hope*, Nan Skelton from the University of Minnesota and Nan Kari, who was at the College of St. Catherine, reported on a project in building the capacity for doing public work in an immigrant community in St. Paul, Minnesota. The work had products such as apprenticeships and mentoring programs. Another example is the work of Scott Peters from Cornell University, who visited Kansas State before I did. He is reviving the ideas of one of the pioneers in cooperative extension, Liberty Hyde Bailey, whose views on community have helped inspire a new coalition of land-grant universities to promote more research on community building.

Public work implies that citizens are producers—the *Economist*’s article to the contrary notwithstanding. There are things that can only be accomplished through the collective efforts of citizens, such as combating the wicked problems that take a community as a whole to solve because no single institution or group in a community has all the necessary resources. To be sure, doubts persist that citizens can really do anything that counts, as implied by the comment about the levees in New Orleans. And citizens have to respond, which we find them doing in deliberative forums. The most important decision people make in these deliberations is not just what policy is best, but whether there is anything that citizens should do.

The nature of public work gets more attention in the articles by Laura Hall Downey and her Kentucky colleagues and by David Brown. The experiment in Kentucky illustrates the importance of

community learning and the role that the media can play. And Brown describes the complex interactions that go on in communities, where no one is in charge and change must come from building relationships with “enough others.” Public work, he suggests, begins by creating this necessary “scaffolding.” (Other accounts of public work emphasize the tasks involved in the work and how they can be carried out in ways that allow citizens to shape their futures. These accounts have been published in the companion to *HEX*, the *Kettering Review*.)

The most fundamental of the public initiatives going on in higher education challenge the dominant epistemology driving most scholarly research, which has been characterized as “epistemic,” meaning “disinterested, impartial, and objective.” If you have a good memory for past *Exchanges*, you may recall discussions of “public scholarship” or references to the moral reasoning that results in “practical wisdom.” Public scholarship, in this context, doesn’t mean the popularization of research, research that is of direct benefit to the public, or research that uses citizens to collect data. Public scholarship recognizes that some forms of knowledge have to be socially constructed out of people’s experience and the things they hold dear. This knowledge, Noëlle McAfee explains in her new book, *Democracy and the Political Unconscious*, is “situated” and interested, rather than being disinterested and objective. Such knowledge is essential in making sound judgments about *what should be*—a question that can’t be answered with expert knowledge. The champions of public scholarship don’t disdain expert knowledge; they try to incorporate it in the social construction of public knowledge.

The Kansas visit, combined with accounts in the *Exchange* of campus initiatives that go beyond providing services, leaves me with the impression that the civic engagement movement is evolving, or at least is capable of evolving, rather than dividing into two camps. University-community partnerships and service learning may be benchmarks along the way to a fundamental rethinking of both higher education and democracy.

Although what I saw in Kansas was impressive, I still couldn’t answer my question about whether the country is moving toward a citizenless democracy. The enthusiasm of the Kansas students for changing the political system was easy to see. These young people certainly don’t intend to be kept on the sidelines. And they aren’t just speaking for one generation. They are giving voice to what

older Americans have been saying about the system for years—that it needs to change in fundamental ways, ways that return citizens to what the Constitution says they must be—responsible sovereigns.

Nonetheless, I haven't been able to dismiss the evidence that we have been sidelining citizens for decades. It's a long-term trend that isn't likely to be reversed quickly. So, despite the excitement of the 2008 election, we could still be on our way to a virtual democracy. Yet I hesitate at the thought. The nation that was born in colonial town meetings didn't have citizens on the sidelines. The nation that began to recover from the economic depressions of the late 19th century through the collective efforts of working men and women, well before government relief arrived (a story populist Kansas knows), wasn't a virtual democracy. And the nation that started reordering race relations in the 1940s, long before civil rights legislation was passed a quarter century later, wasn't a citizenless democracy. This country was built on foundations laid by a working citizenry that got dirt under its fingernails.

Strengthening this kind of democracy in the face of powerful trends to sideline citizens is an enormous challenge. That is why the way campus initiatives understand the role of citizens and what they do to build civic capacity is so important. I am convinced—and have said so before—that we are living in an era when the meaning of democracy is up for grabs. While the question I discussed in Kansas was presented at an academic institution, it is far from an “academic” question.

CONTRIBUTORS

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